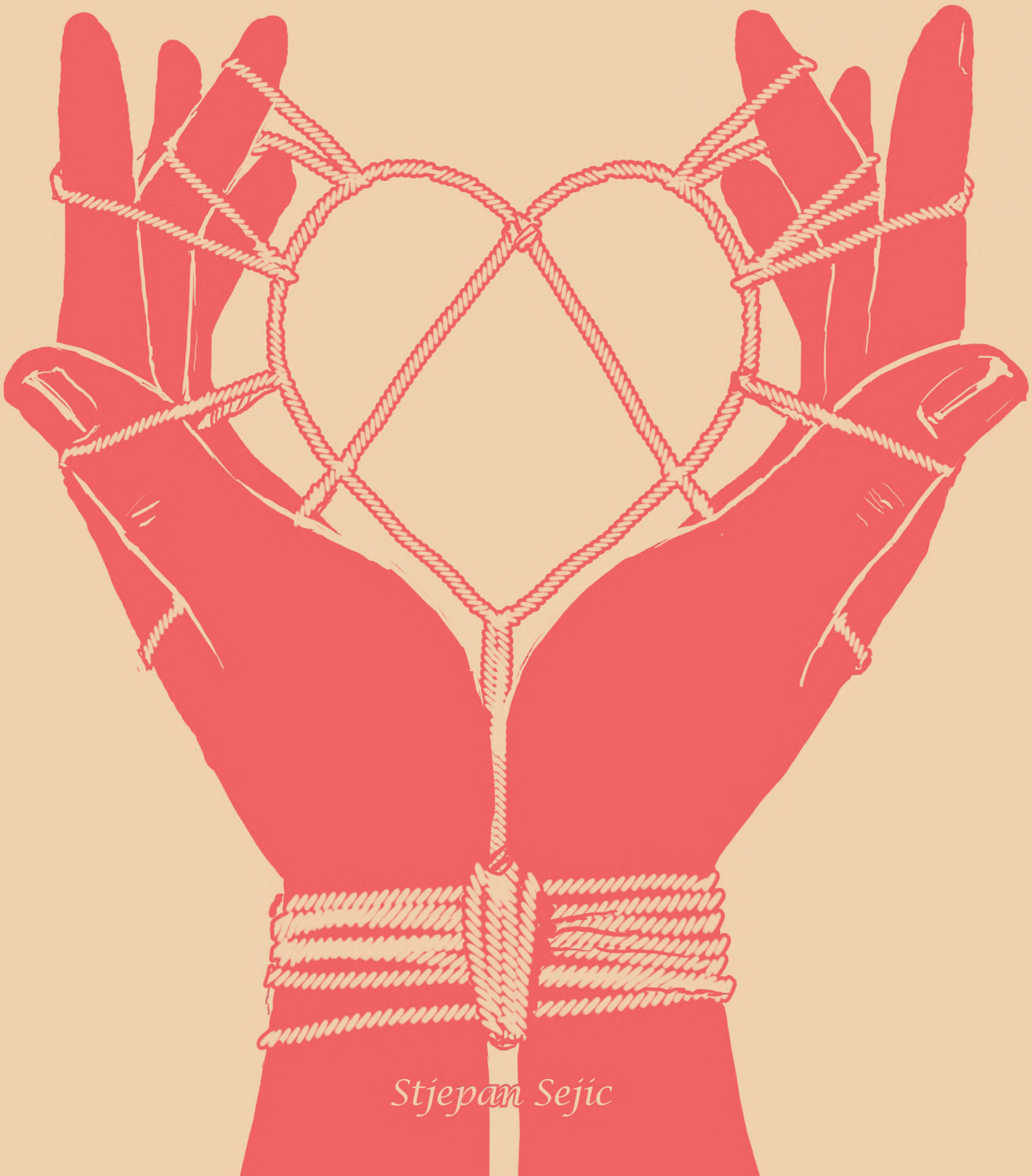
Sunstone™

Book Two



Stjepan Sejic

Top Cow Productions Presents...

Sunstone™

Book Two

Created by Stjepan Sejic

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Top Cow Productions Presents...

Sunstone™

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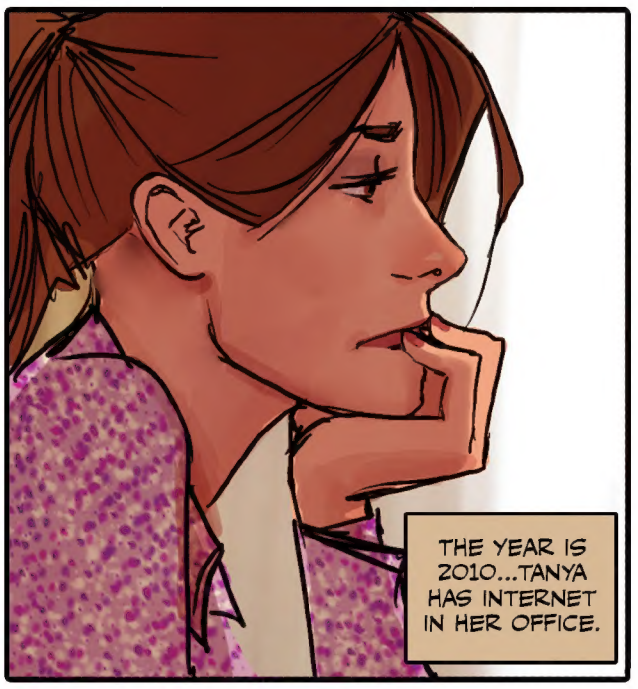
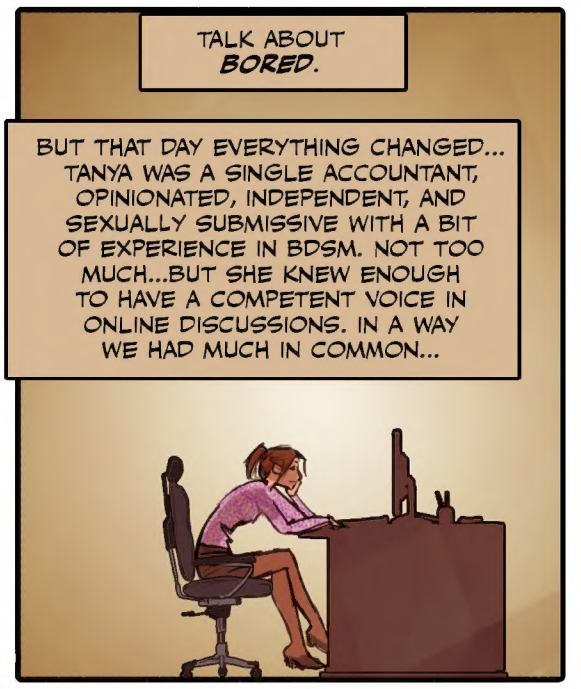
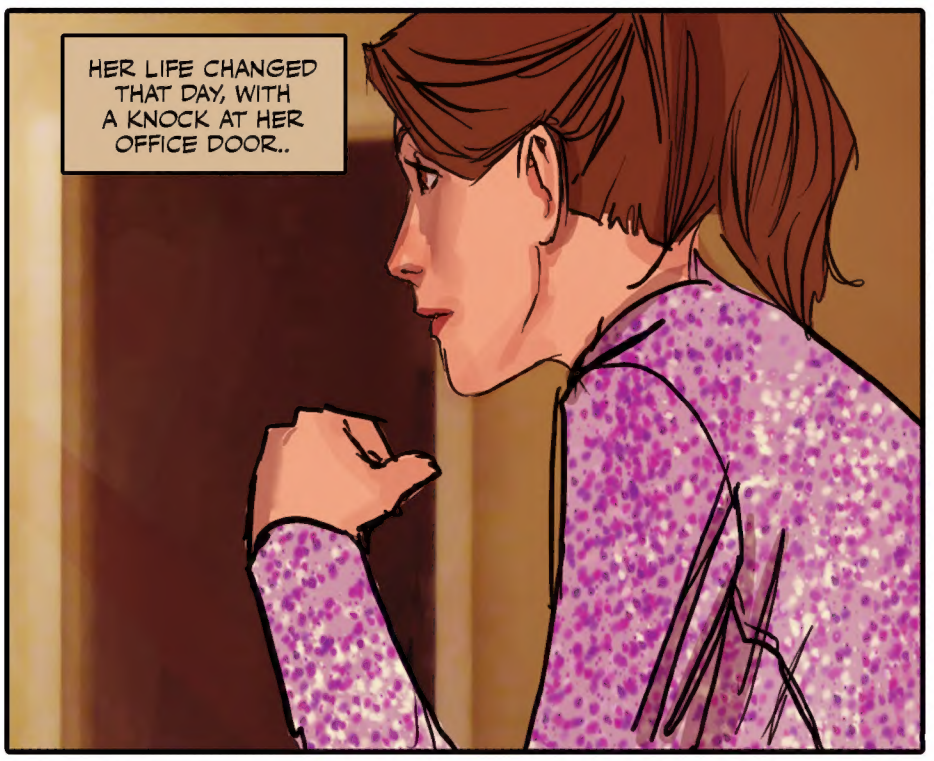
TWO YEARS EARLIER...
YES...THAT IS *SOLITAIRE*.


THE YEAR IS 2010...TANYA HAS INTERNET IN HER OFFICE.

TONS OF FREE TIME TO PLAY GAMES ONLINE... AND SHE IS PLAYING SOLITAIRE...


TALK ABOUT *BORED*.
BUT THAT DAY EVERYTHING CHANGED... TANYA WAS A SINGLE ACCOUNTANT, OPINIONATED, INDEPENDENT, AND SEXUALLY SUBMISSIVE WITH A BIT OF EXPERIENCE IN BDSM. NOT TOO MUCH...BUT SHE KNEW ENOUGH TO HAVE A COMPETENT VOICE IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS. IN A WAY WE HAD MUCH IN COMMON...


HER LIFE CHANGED THAT DAY, WITH A KNOCK AT HER OFFICE DOOR..

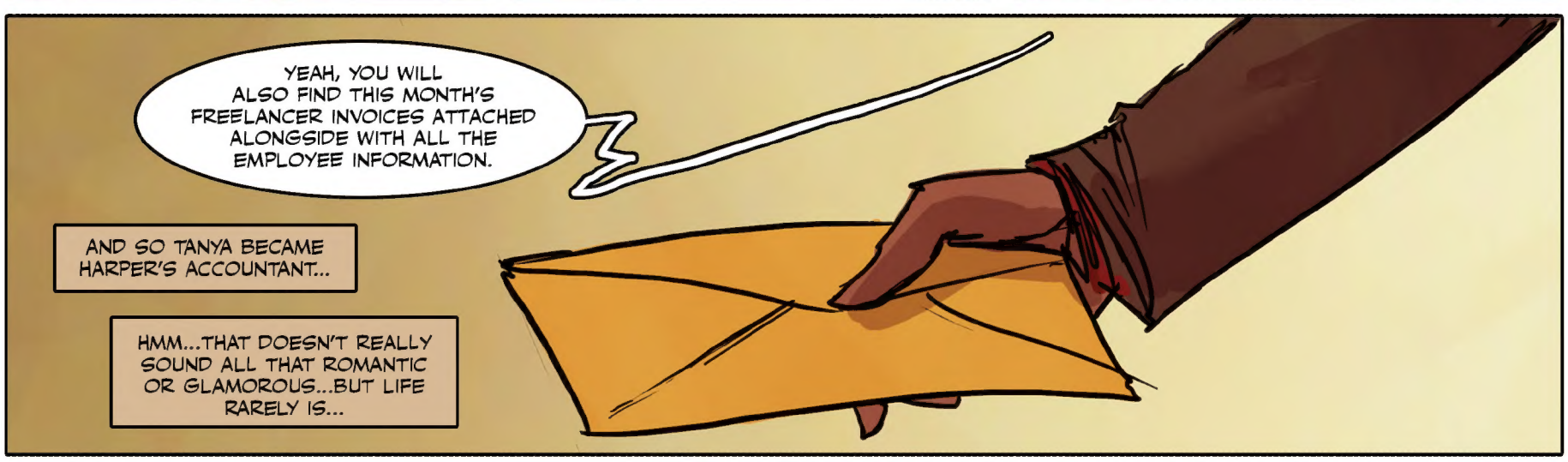
WHO WAS IT?
COME IN!

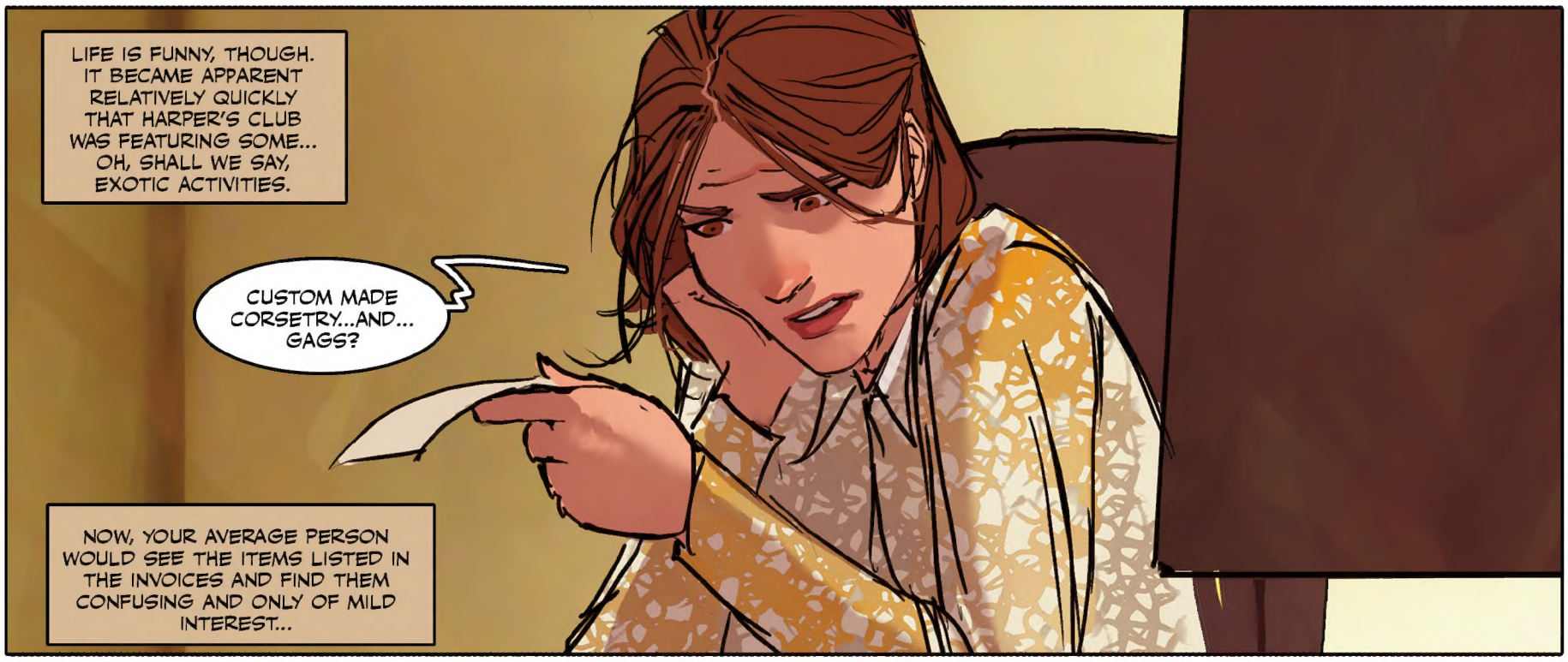
DESTINY!!!
MISS WILKINS, I'M *HARPER THOMAS*... I...MADE AN APPOINTMENT.
OKAY...IT WAS ACTUALLY HARPER... BUT YOU GET MY POINT.

AH, YES, MY TWO-O'CLOCK.

YES. I CALLED ABOUT MY CLUB. I NEED AN ACCOUNTANT AND YOU CAME HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, MISS WILKINS.
AND BY THE WAY, FEEL FREE TO CALL ME HARPER.

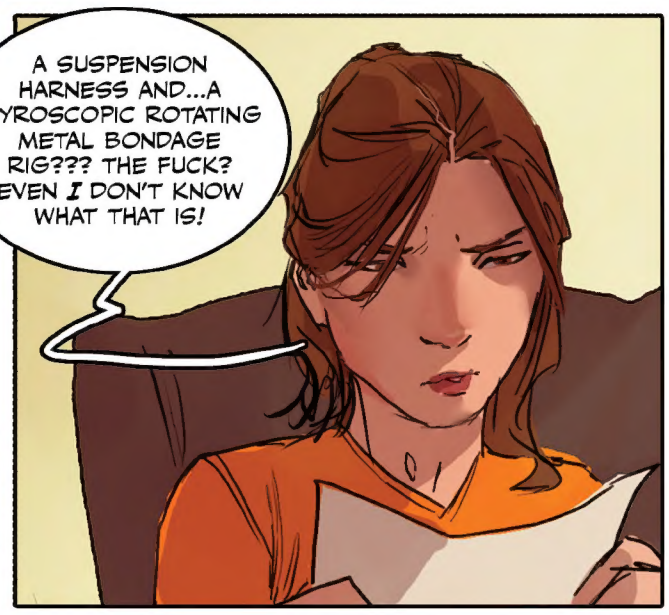
IF IT'S ALL THE SAME, I PREFER MR. THOMAS.
NOW, I PRESUME YOU GATHERED THE PAPERWORK I ASKED FOR?


YEAH, YOU WILL ALSO FIND THIS MONTH'S FREELANCER INVOICES ATTACHED ALONGSIDE WITH ALL THE EMPLOYEE INFORMATION.
AND SO TANYA BECAME HARPER'S ACCOUNTANT...
HMM...THAT DOESN'T REALLY SOUND ALL THAT ROMANTIC OR GLAMOROUS...BUT LIFE RARELY IS...


LIFE IS FUNNY, THOUGH. IT BECAME APPARENT RELATIVELY QUICKLY THAT HARPER'S CLUB WAS FEATURING SOME... OH, SHALL WE SAY, EXOTIC ACTIVITIES.
CUSTOM MADE CORSETRY...AND... GAGS?
NOW, YOUR AVERAGE PERSON WOULD SEE THE ITEMS LISTED IN THE INVOICES AND FIND THEM CONFUSING AND ONLY OF MILD INTEREST...

BUT TANYA KNEW BETTER.
FOUR LEATHER STRAIT-JACKETS AND TWO LATEX ONES...

TWO ARMBINDERS, THREE PAIRS OF CUSTOM BALLET BOOTS, AND TWO PAIRS OF... PONY BOOTS???


A SUSPENSION HARNESS AND...A GYROSCOPIC ROTATING METAL BONDAGE RIG??? THE FUCK? EVEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS!

ARE YOU A PIMP?
A-HEM...SO TANYA HAS ALWAYS HAD A LOW TOLERANCE FOR BULLSHIT. THIS SOMETIMES MADE HER LOOK...HARSH.

A...PIMP?
IS THIS A RACE THING?
DO I NEED TO MENTION THAT TANYA AND HARPER STARTED THINGS OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT?

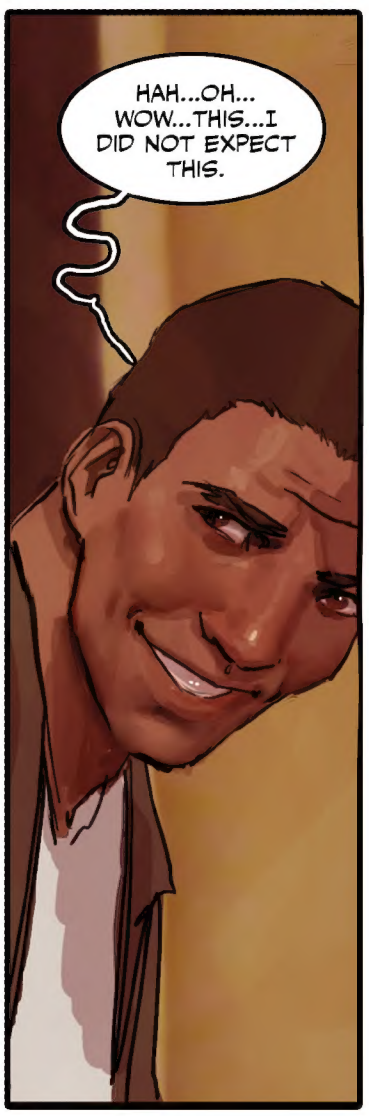
NO, THIS IS AN "I'M NOT AN IDIOT AND I KNOW WELL WHAT THE ITEMS IN YOUR INVOICES ARE USED FOR" THING.

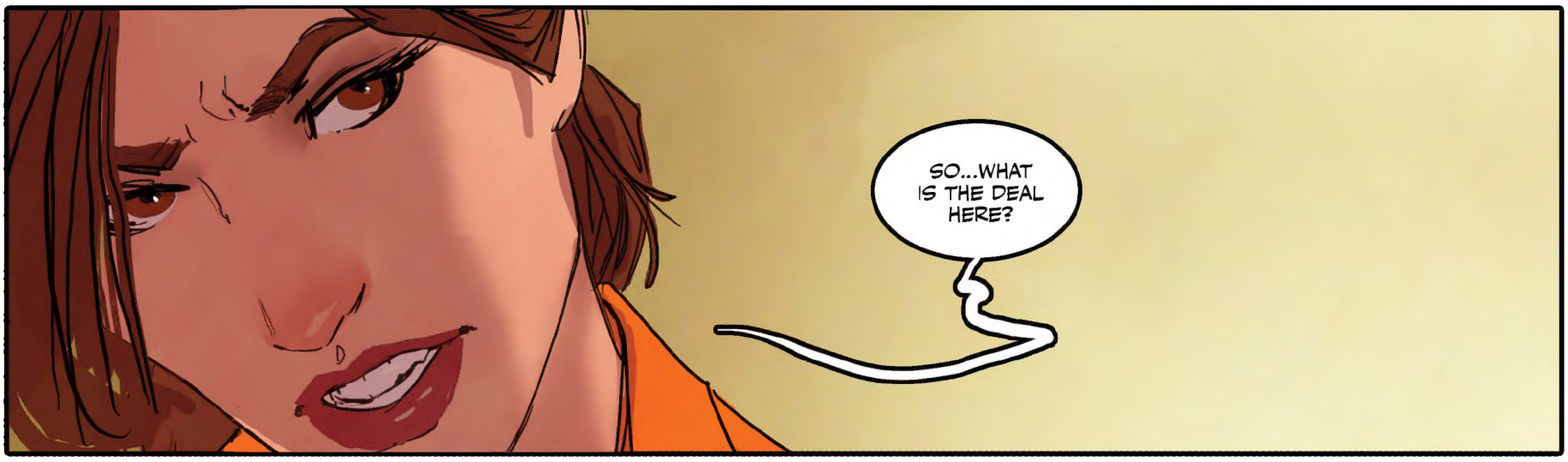
NOW IF IT WAS JUST THE FETISHWEAR, I WOULD JUST PRESUME YOU ARE RUNNING A STRIP CLUB.

BUT I KNOW WHAT THE REST OF THE STUFF IS USED FOR, SO CUT THE BULLSHIT, MR. THOMAS. NO ACCOUNTING WILL MAKE PROSTITUTION LEGAL, AT LEAST NOT FROM MY END.

SNORT!

BWAHAHA HAHAHAHAHA!
CARE TO LET ME IN ON THE JOKE, MR. THOMAS?


HAH...OH... WOW...THIS...I DID NOT EXPECT THIS.

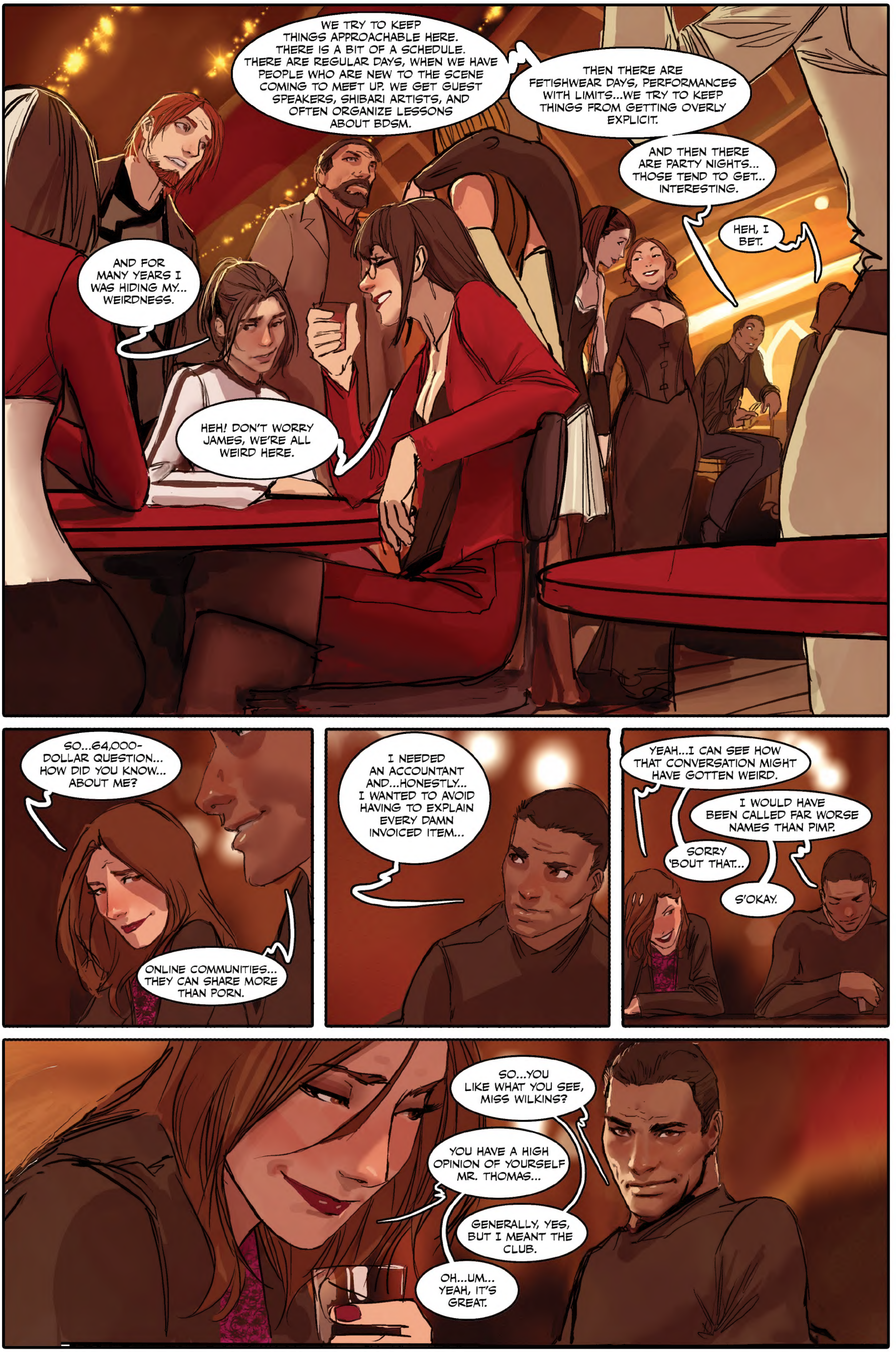

SO...WHAT IS THE DEAL HERE?

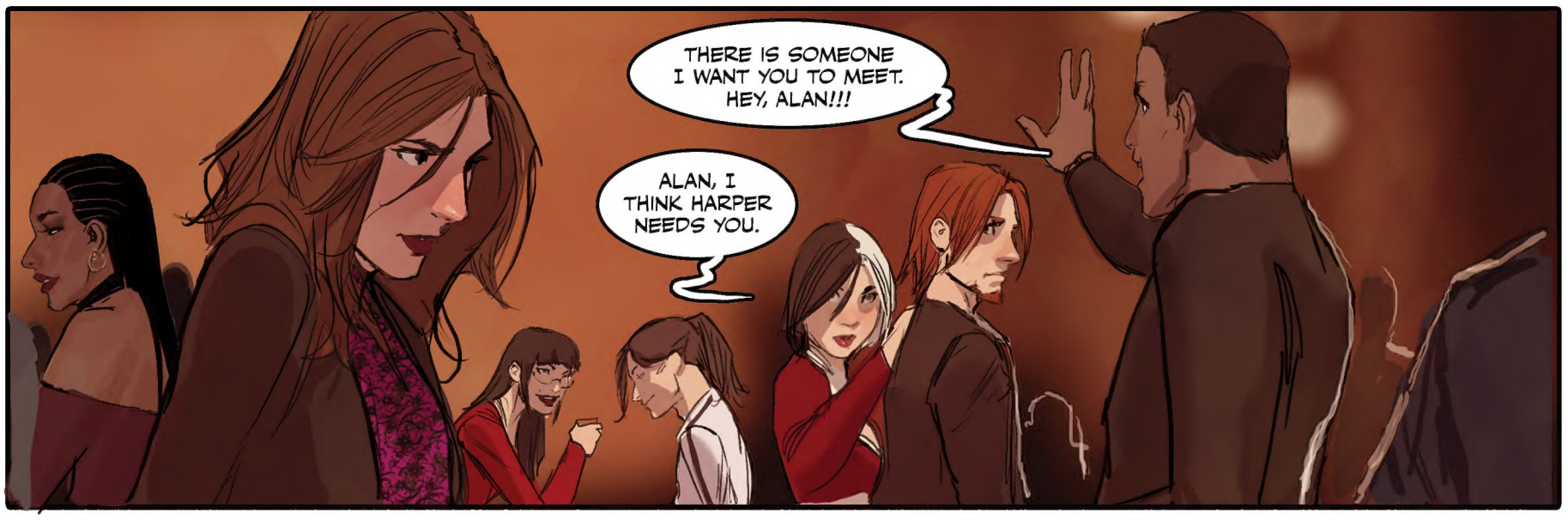
OH, MISS WILKINS, YOU'VE REALLY GOT THIS ALL WRONG.

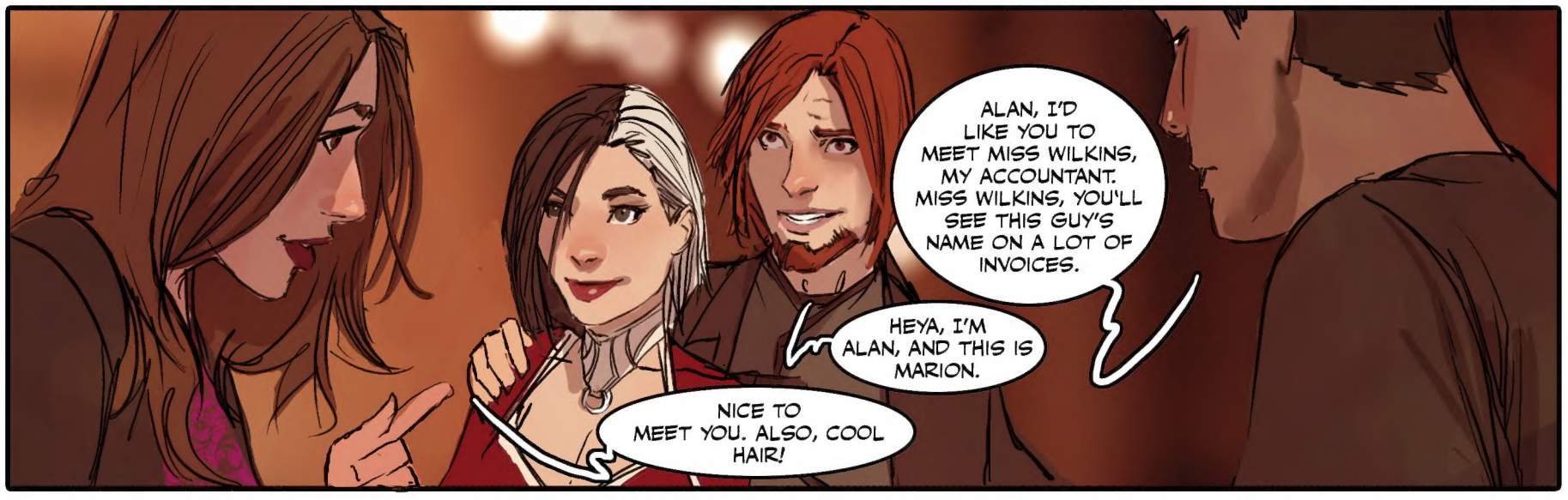
THEN *ENLIGHTEN* ME.
GLADLY...THOUGH IT WOULD BE EASIER IF YOU JUST CAME AND SAW THE CLUB FOR YOURSELF.

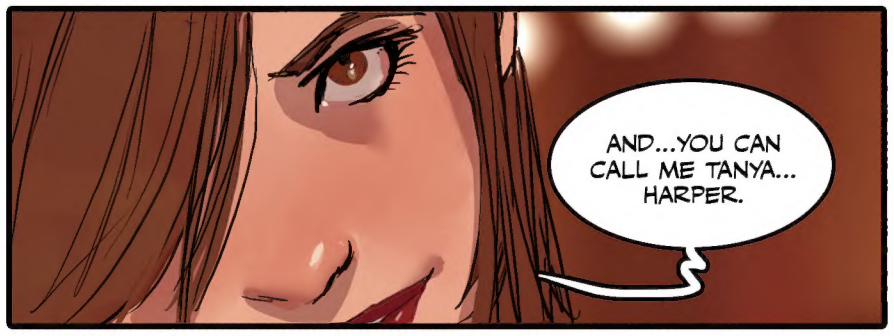
PLEASE... I PROMISE, IT IS NOTHING LIKE WHAT YOU IMAGINE. IN FACT I THINK YOU MIGHT FIND IT TO BE RIGHT UP YOUR ALLEY.

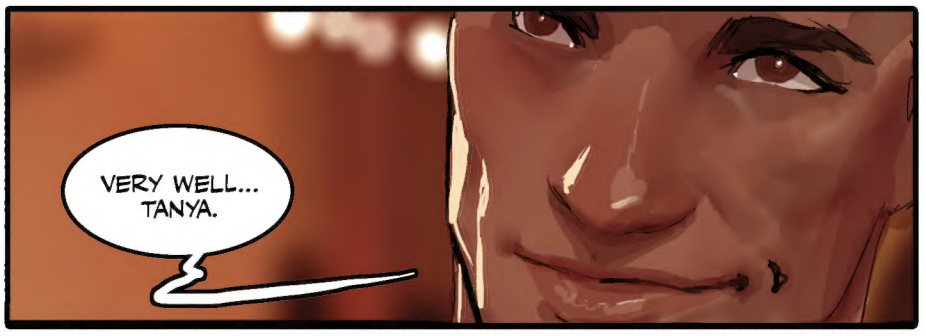
LATER THAT NIGHT...
SO...
IT'S A BDSM CLUB.
IN A WAY, YES.
AND...IT SEEMS TO BE QUITE A MODERATE ONE.
WE JUST OPENED A MONTH AGO.
GUESS THAT'S WHY THERE WAS NOTHING ABOUT IT ONLINE...
HEH...WELL.. THAT AND THERE ARE A LOT OF RESULTS IF YOU SEARCH FOR "CRIMSON."

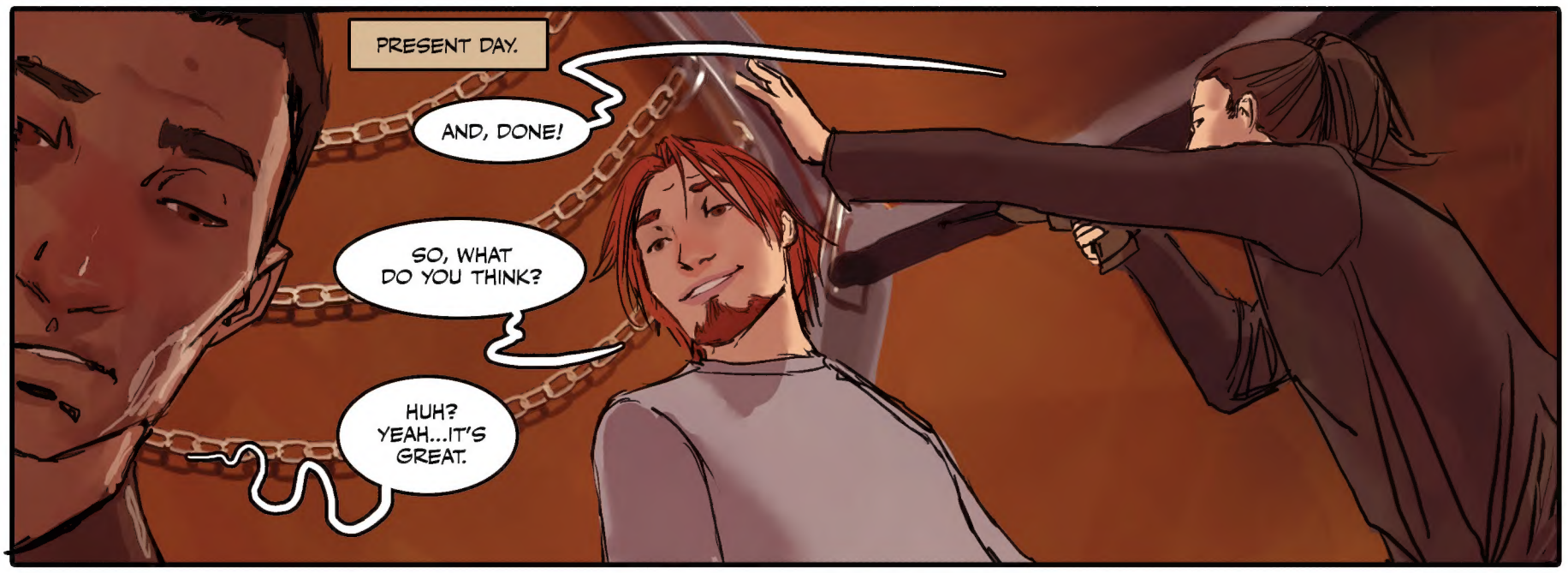

WE TRY TO KEEP THINGS APPROACHABLE HERE. THERE IS A BIT OF A SCHEDULE. THERE ARE REGULAR DAYS, WHEN WE HAVE PEOPLE WHO ARE NEW TO THE SCENE COMING TO MEET UP. WE GET GUEST SPEAKERS, SHIBARI ARTISTS, AND OFTEN ORGANIZE LESSONS ABOUT BDSM.
THEN THERE ARE FETISHWEAR DAYS, PERFORMANCES WITH LIMITS...WE TRY TO KEEP THINGS FROM GETTING OVERLY EXPLICIT.
AND THEN THERE ARE PARTY NIGHTS... THOSE TEND TO GET... INTERESTING.
HEH, I BET.
AND FOR MANY YEARS I WAS HIDING MY... WEIRDNESS.
HEH! DON'T WORRY JAMES, WE'RE ALL WEIRD HERE.
SO...64,000-DOLLAR QUESTION... HOW DID YOU KNOW... ABOUT ME?
ONLINE COMMUNITIES... THEY CAN SHARE MORE THAN PORN.
I NEEDED AN ACCOUNTANT AND...HONESTLY... I WANTED TO AVOID HAVING TO EXPLAIN EVERY DAMN INVOICED ITEM...
YEAH...I CAN SEE HOW THAT CONVERSATION MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN WEIRD.
I WOULD HAVE BEEN CALLED FAR WORSE NAMES THAN PIMP.
SORRY 'BOUT THAT...
S'OKAY.
SO...YOU LIKE WHAT YOU SEE, MISS WILKINS?
YOU HAVE A HIGH OPINION OF YOURSELF MR. THOMAS...
GENERALLY, YES, BUT I MEANT THE CLUB.
OH...UM... YEAH, IT'S GREAT.

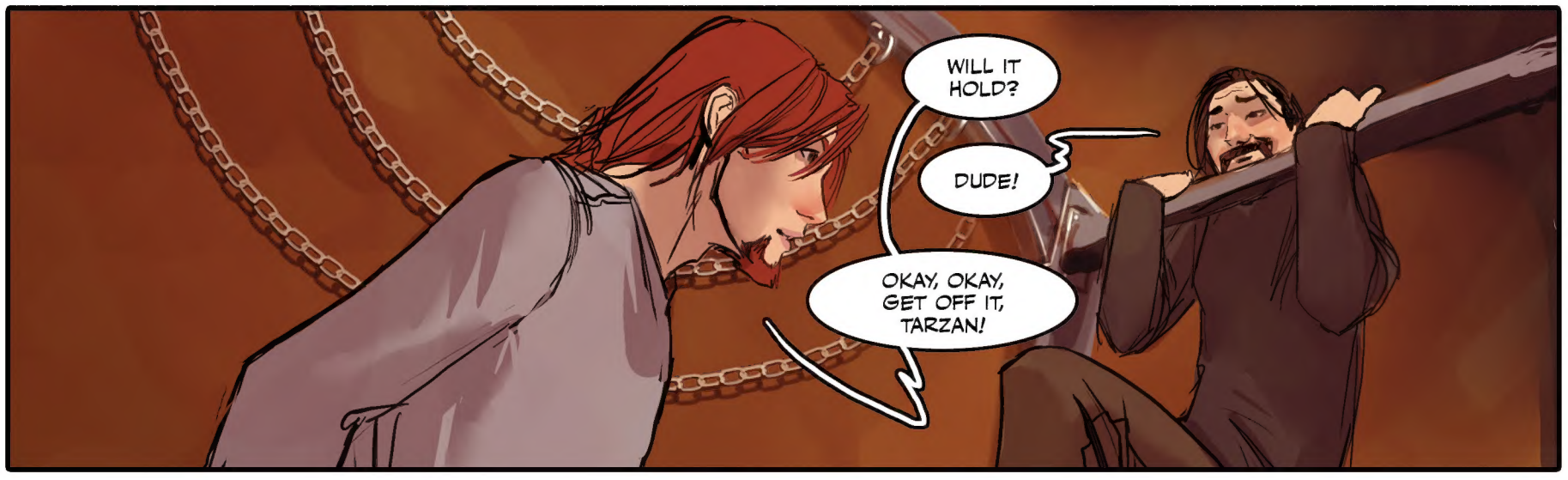

THERE IS SOMEONE I WANT YOU TO MEET. HEY, ALAN!!!
ALAN, I THINK HARPER NEEDS YOU.

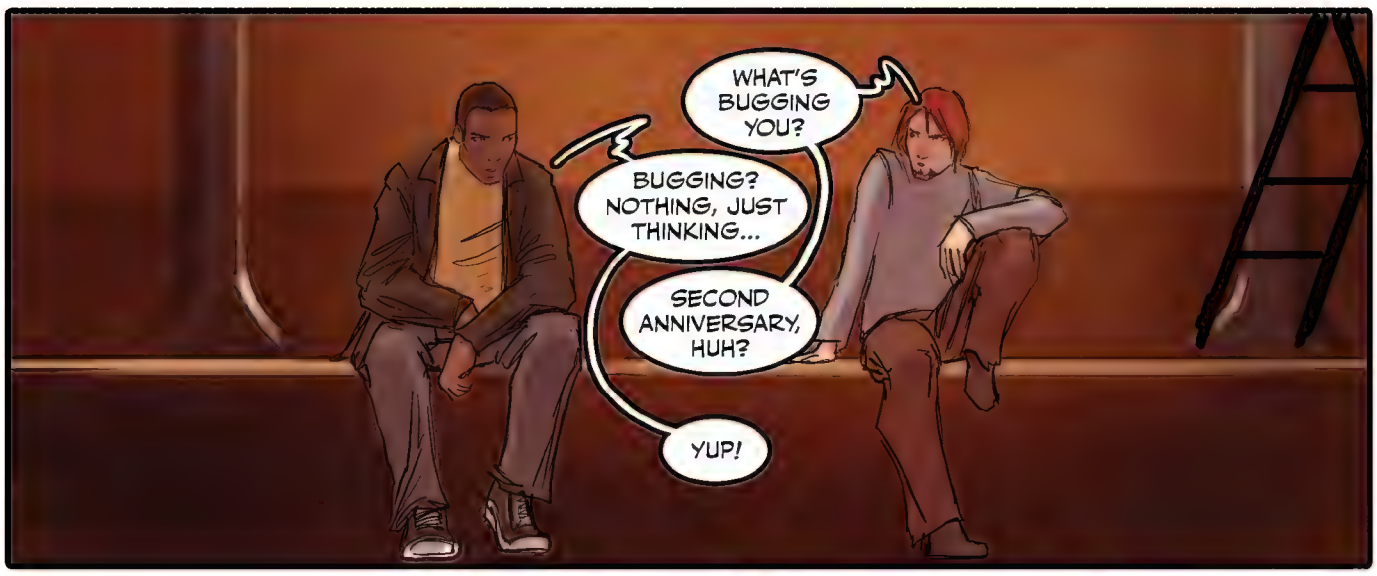

ALAN, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET MISS WILKINS, MY ACCOUNTANT. MISS WILKINS, YOU'LL SEE THIS GUY'S NAME ON A LOT OF INVOICES.
HEYA, I'M ALAN, AND THIS IS MARION.
NICE TO MEET YOU. ALSO, COOL HAIR!


AND...YOU CAN CALL ME TANYA... HARPER.


VERY WELL... TANYA.


PRESENT DAY.
AND, DONE!
SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
HUH? YEAH...IT'S GREAT.

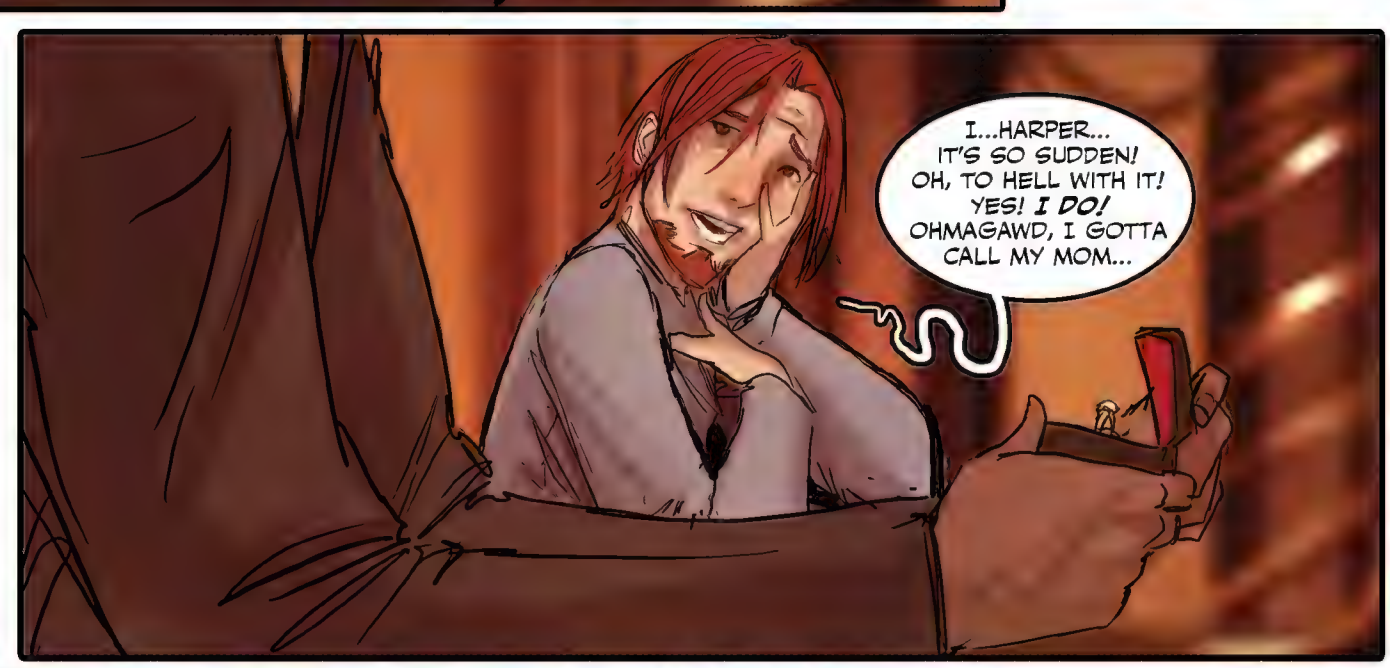

WILL IT HOLD?
DUDE!
OKAY, OKAY, GET OFF IT, TARZAN!

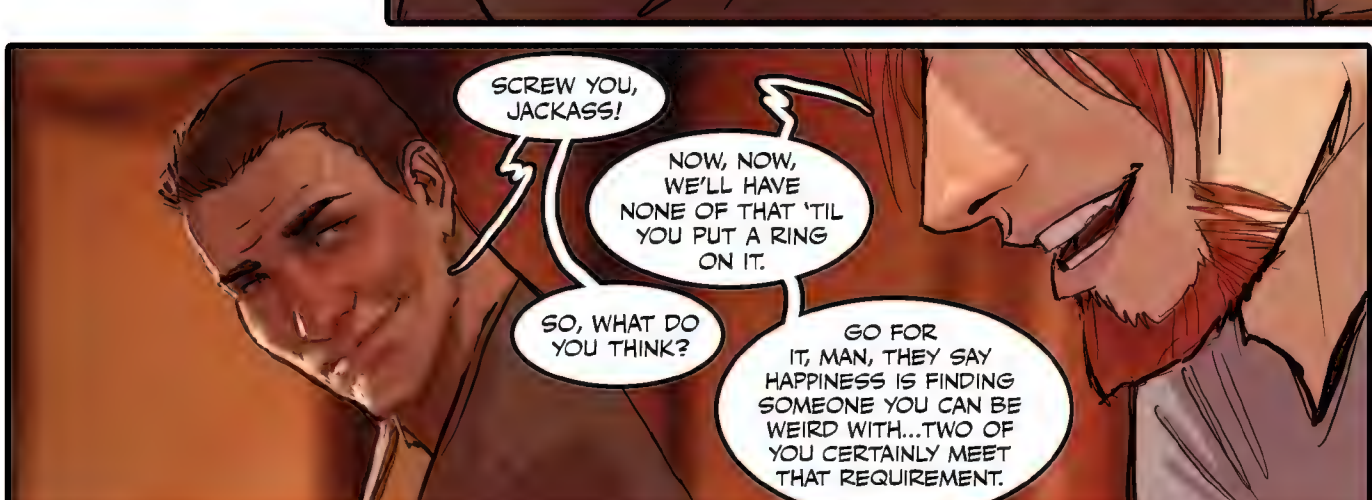

WHAT'S BUGGING YOU?
BUGGING? NOTHING, JUST THINKING...
SECOND ANNIVERSARY, HUH?
YUP!

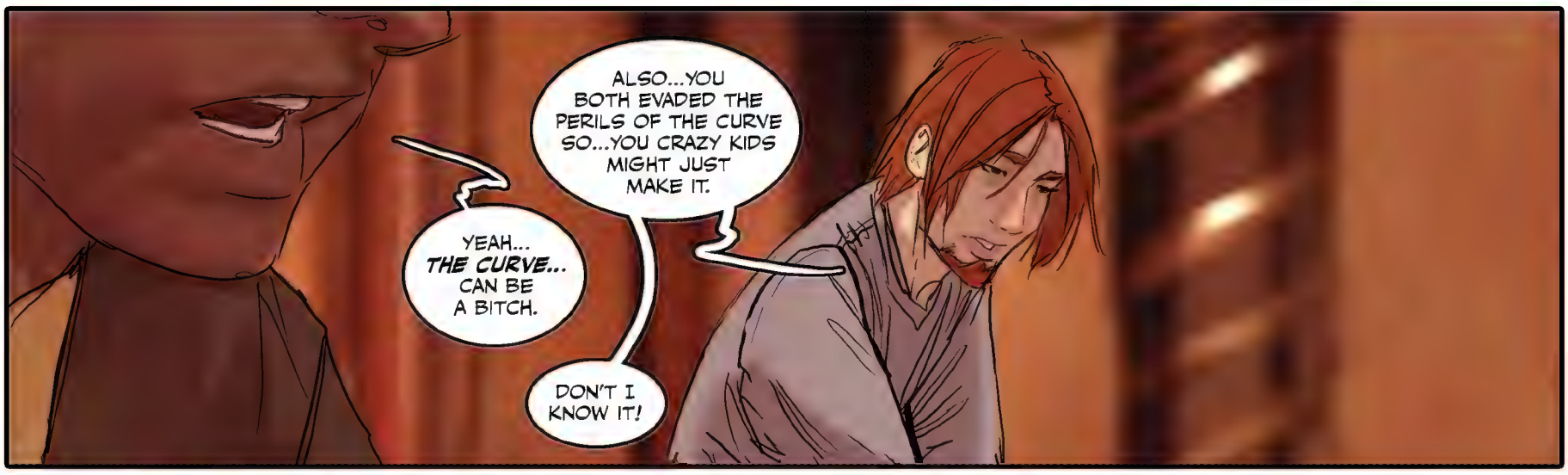
BIG PLANS?

THE BIGGEST!

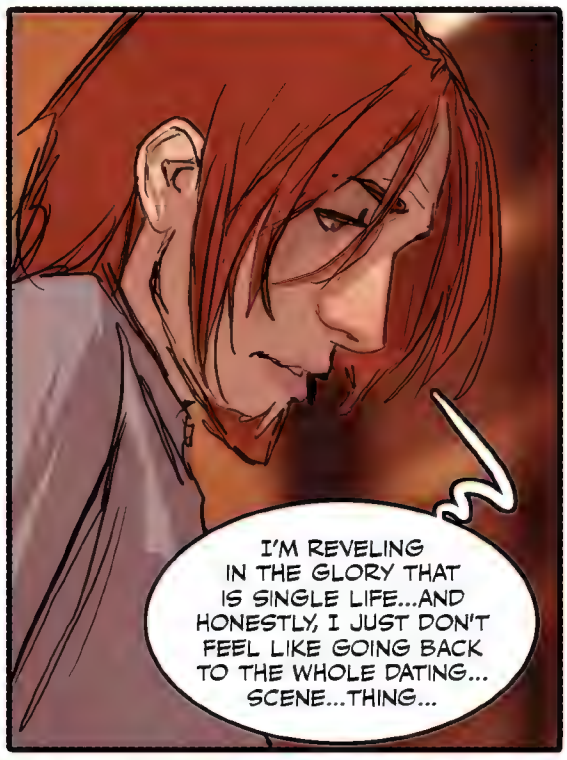
DO TELL!


I...HARPER... IT'S SO SUDDEN! OH, TO HELL WITH IT! YES! I DO! OHMAGAWD, I GOTTA CALL MY MOM...


SCREW YOU, JACKASS!
NOW, NOW, WE'LL HAVE NONE OF THAT 'TIL YOU PUT A RING ON IT.
SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
GO FOR IT, MAN, THEY SAY HAPPINESS IS FINDING SOMEONE YOU CAN BE WEIRD WITH...TWO OF YOU CERTAINLY MEET THAT REQUIREMENT.


ALSO...YOU BOTH EVADED THE PERILS OF THE CURVE SO...YOU CRAZY KIDS MIGHT JUST MAKE IT.
YEAH... THE CURVE... CAN BE A BITCH.
DON'T I KNOW IT!

SO WHAT ABOUT YOU?
NO NEWS, REALLY. I'M NOT LOOKING FOR ANYONE AT THE TIME BEING.


I'M REVELING IN THE GLORY THAT IS SINGLE LIFE...AND HONESTLY, I JUST DON'T FEEL LIKE GOING BACK TO THE WHOLE DATING... SCENE...THING...

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE PROBLEMS HERE...
I KNOW...
WHAT ABOUT ALLISON?
WHAT ABOUT HER?
TWO OF YOU...

JUST FRIENDS... ALAS, NO BENEFITS. ANYWAY, SHE SEEMS TO BE TAKING THINGS TO THE NEXT LEVEL WITH LISA.

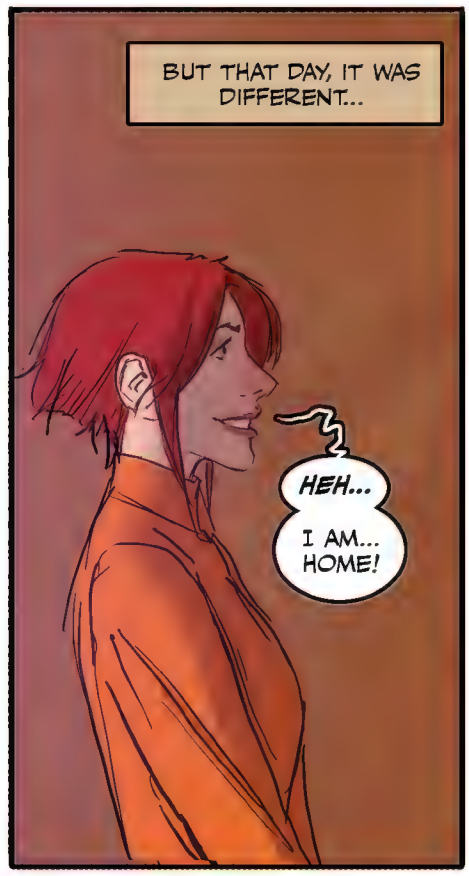
REALLY? WOW...THAT GIRL REALLY DID HER GOOD.

YYYYUP!
IT'S ACTUALLY KINDA FUNNY...

WHAT IS?
THEY ARE ALSO ABOUT TO TAKE...

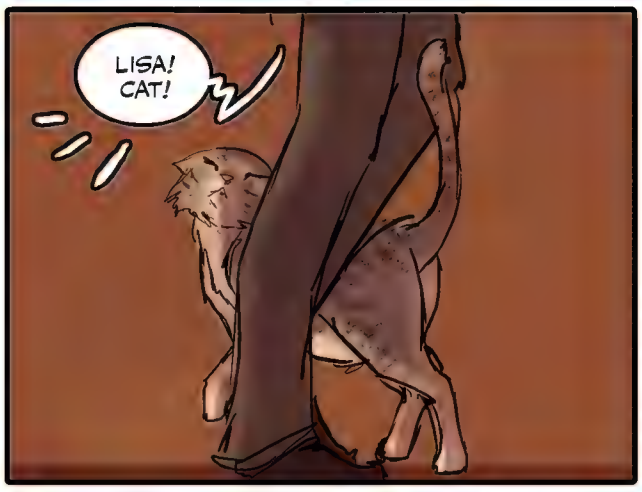
ONE SMALL STEP FOR ME...
ONE GIANT LEAP FOR... UM...ALLY AND ME?
OKAY, I WON'T LIE... IT WAS A LITTLE WEIRD.
I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE...

CROSSED THIS THRESHOLD QUITE A FEW TIMES.

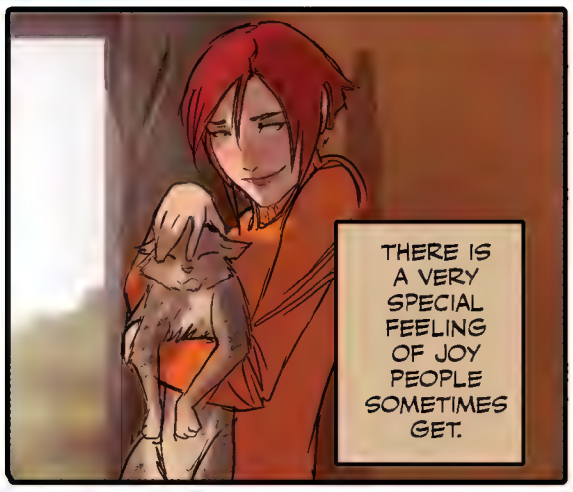

BUT THAT DAY, IT WAS DIFFERENT...
HEH...
I AM... HOME!

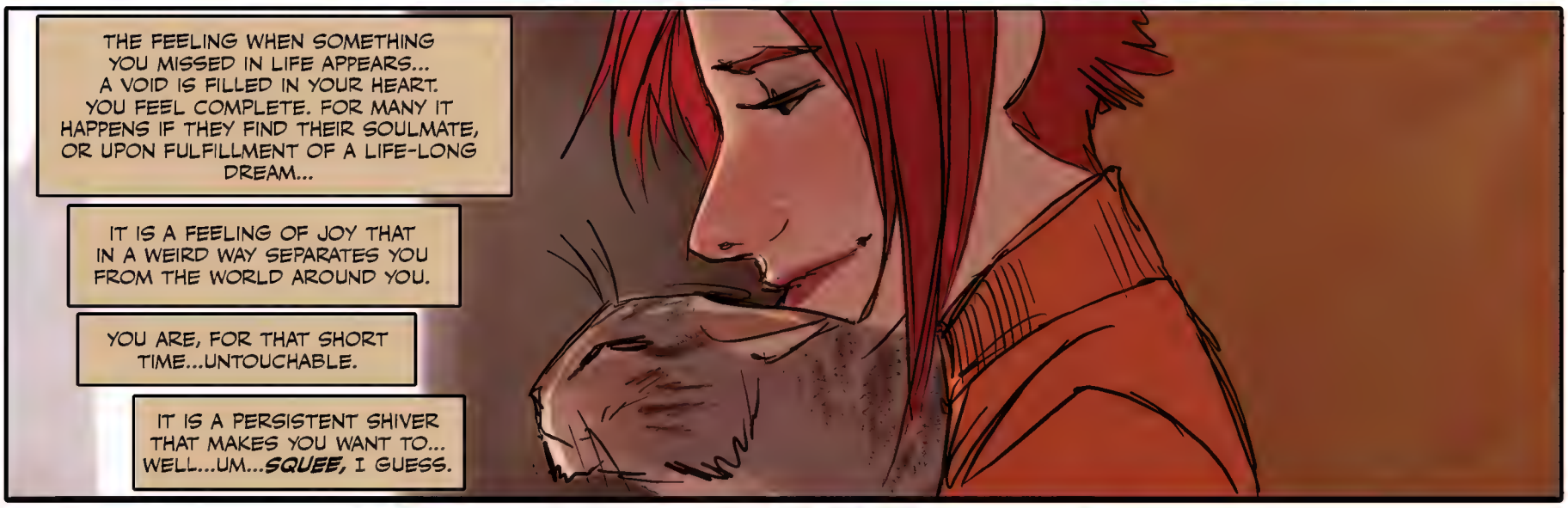
ON YOUR RIGHT!
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, JIMMY? DAMN!

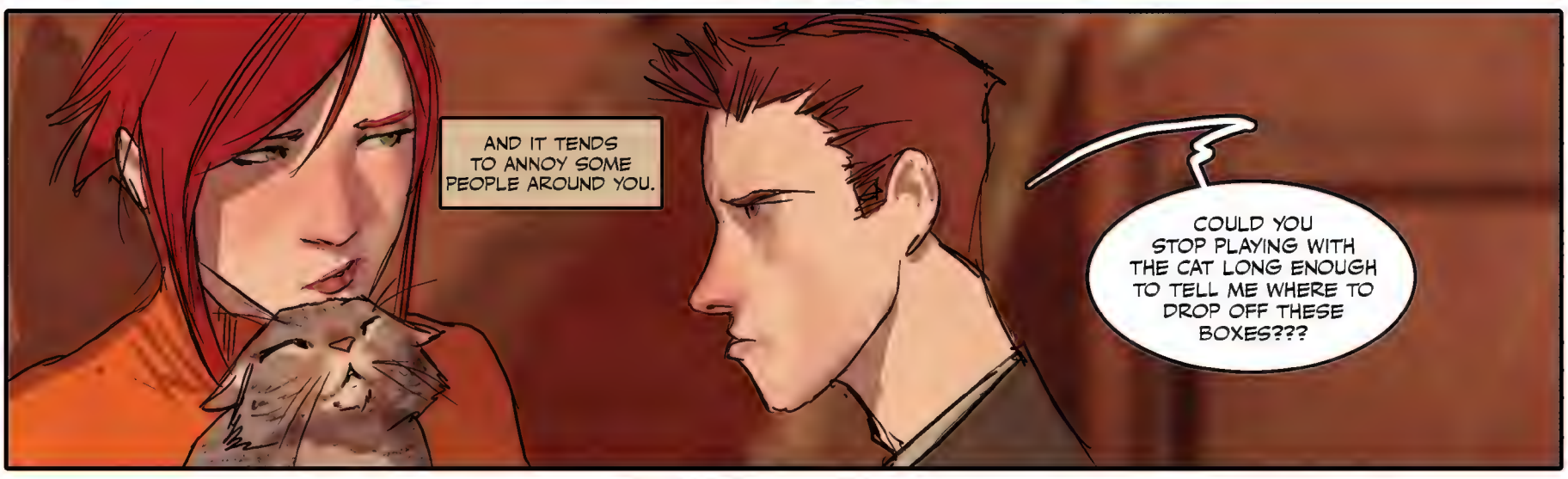
OY, LISA... THIS CAT IS DETERMINED TO TRIP ME, A LITTLE HELP OVER HERE?
BOOKS
YOUR HEAVY-ASS BOOKS ARE MY PROBLEM...BUY A TABLET ALREADY!
I HAPPEN TO LIKE THE SMELL OF BOOKS!
SIGH... WEIRDO!

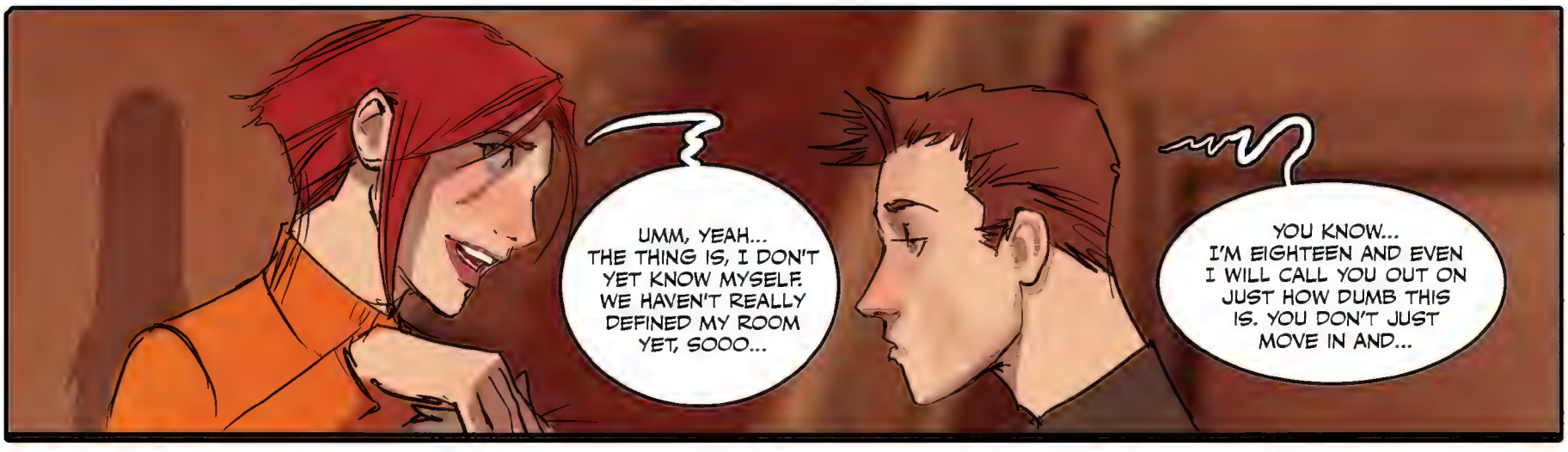

LISA! CAT!

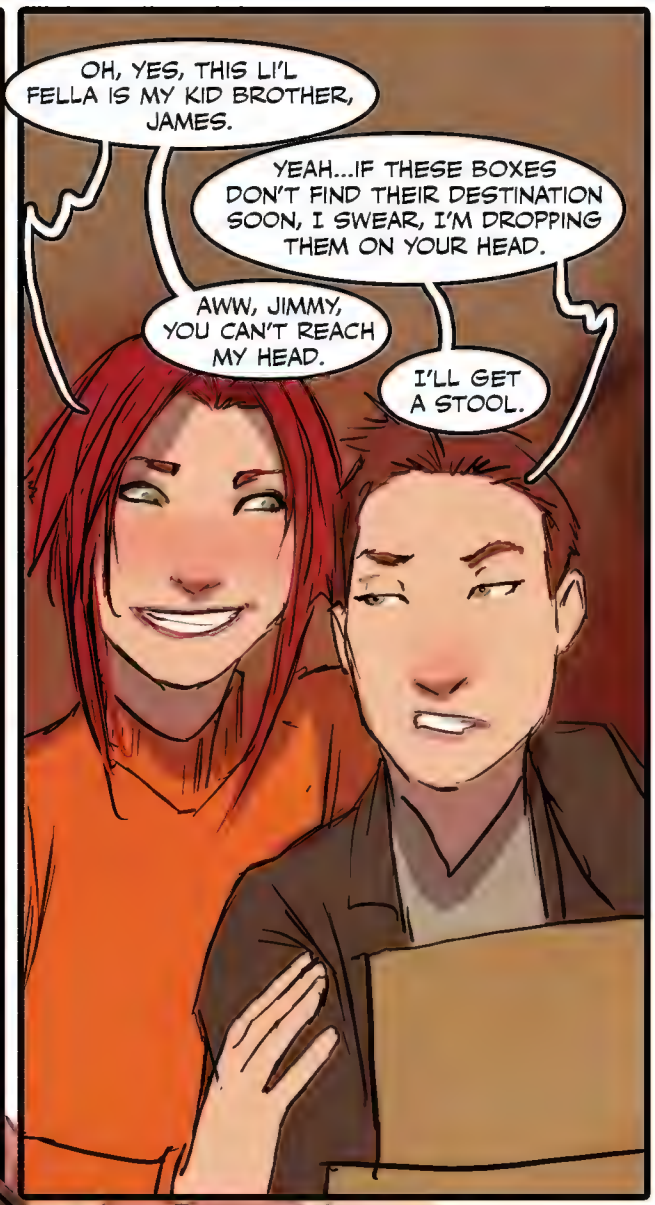
BONKERS, C'MERE!


THERE IS A VERY SPECIAL FEELING OF JOY PEOPLE SOMETIMES GET.


THE FEELING WHEN SOMETHING YOU MISSED IN LIFE APPEARS... A VOID IS FILLED IN YOUR HEART. YOU FEEL COMPLETE. FOR MANY IT HAPPENS IF THEY FIND THEIR SOULMATE, OR UPON FULFILLMENT OF A LIFE-LONG DREAM...
IT IS A FEELING OF JOY THAT IN A WEIRD WAY SEPARATES YOU FROM THE WORLD AROUND YOU.
YOU ARE, FOR THAT SHORT TIME...UNTOUCHABLE.
IT IS A PERSISTENT SHIVER THAT MAKES YOU WANT TO... WELL...UM...SQUEE, I GUESS.


AND IT TENDS TO ANNOY SOME PEOPLE AROUND YOU.
COULD YOU STOP PLAYING WITH THE CAT LONG ENOUGH TO TELL ME WHERE TO DROP OFF THESE BOXES???


UMM, YEAH... THE THING IS, I DON'T YET KNOW MYSELF. WE HAVEN'T REALLY DEFINED MY ROOM YET, SOOO...
YOU KNOW... I'M EIGHTEEN AND EVEN I WILL CALL YOU OUT ON JUST HOW DUMB THIS IS. YOU DON'T JUST MOVE IN AND...



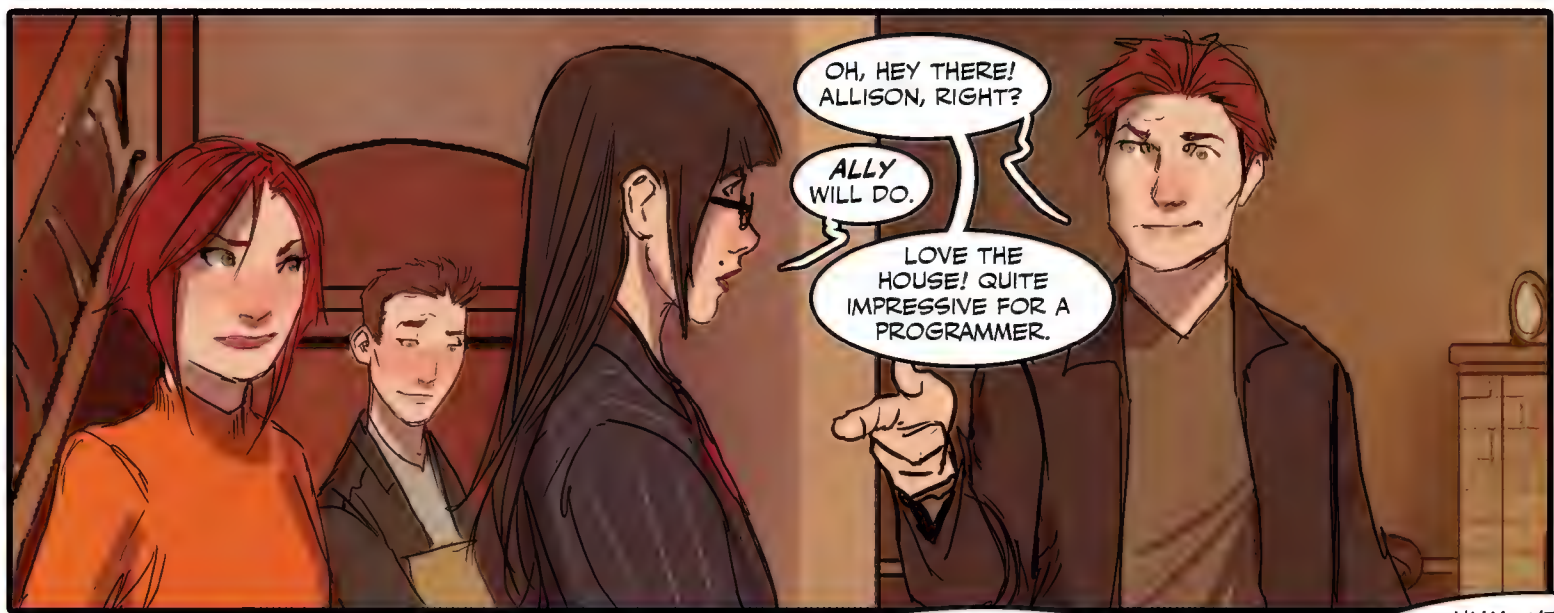
ANYWAYS, JIMMY, THIS IS MY *BFF*, ALLISON.

UMM... YEAH... HI...

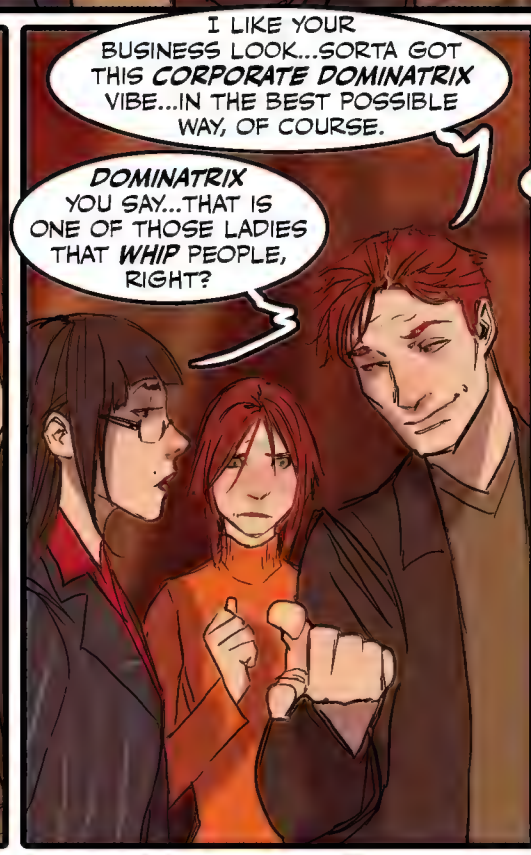
HEYA, JIMMY!

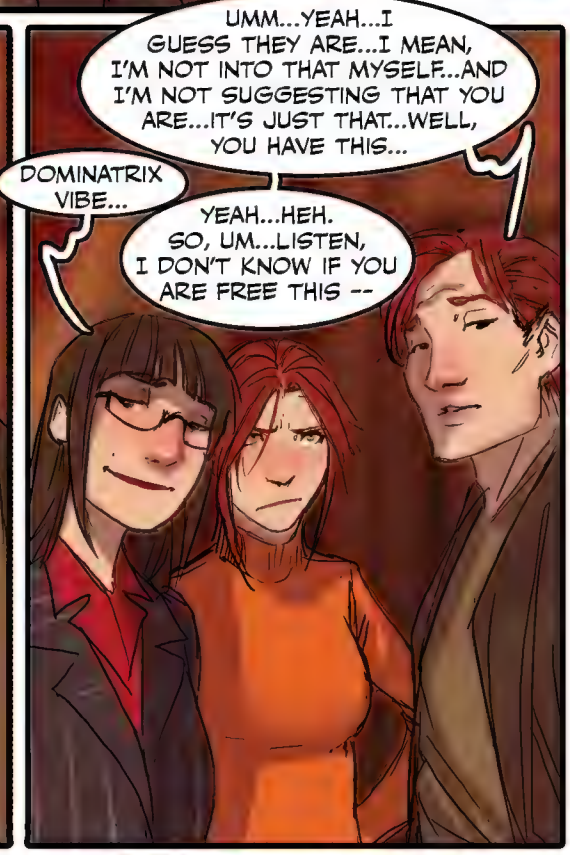
AHEM...YEAH... JIMMY KINDA LIKED ALLY FOR A BIT...

SO...YKNOW, IMAGINE SLOW MOTION, SWOONING MUSIC, ALL THAT CHEESY CRAP.

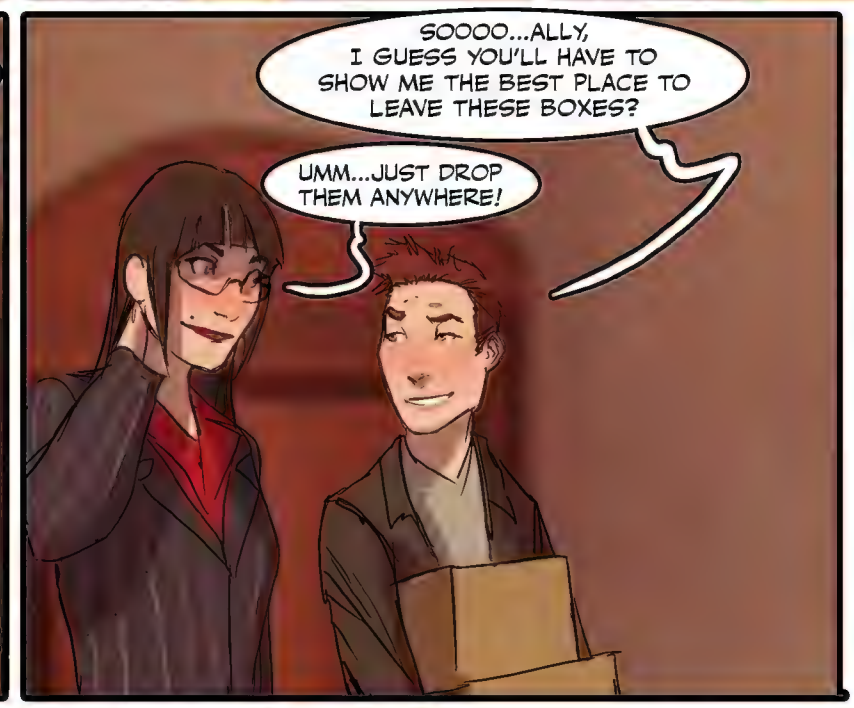

OH, HEY THERE! ALLISON, RIGHT?
ALLY WILL DO.
LOVE THE HOUSE! QUITE IMPRESSIVE FOR A PROGRAMMER.

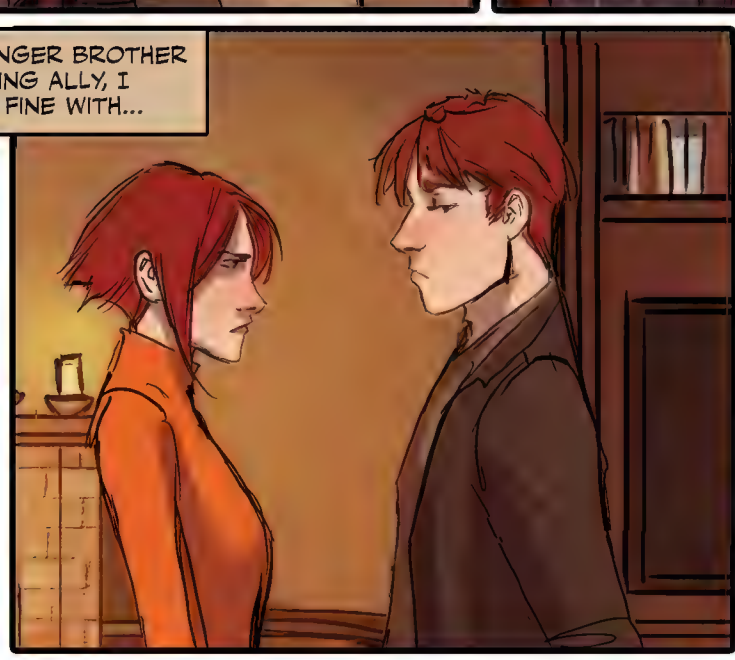
WELL...YOU KNOW, I'VE GOT A BIT OF BUSINESS SENSE.
SENSE AND THE LOOKS TO MATCH! SPEAKING OF WHICH...

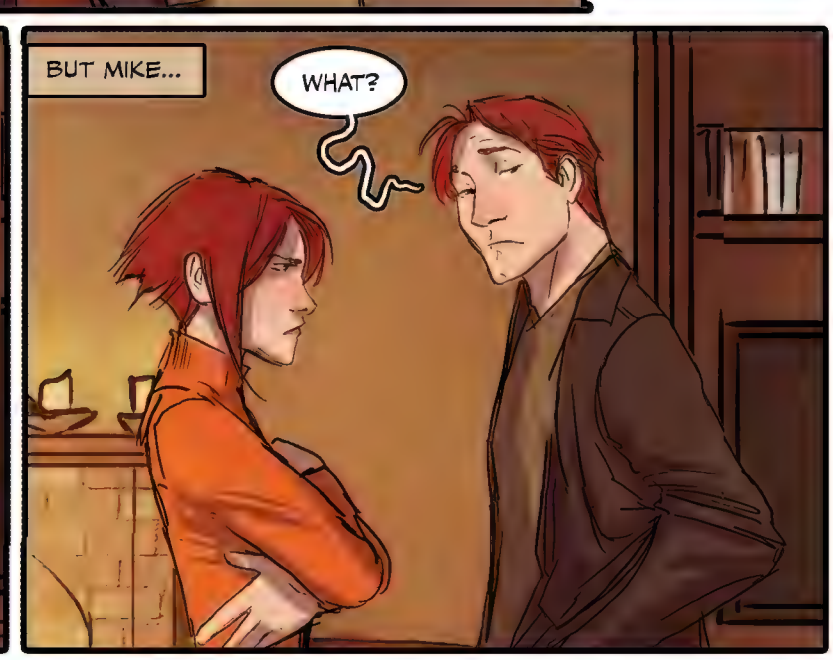

I LIKE YOUR BUSINESS LOOK...SORTA GOT THIS CORPORATE DOMINATRIX VIBE...IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY, OF COURSE.
DOMINATRIX YOU SAY...THAT IS ONE OF THOSE LADIES THAT WHIP PEOPLE, RIGHT?


UMM...YEAH...I GUESS THEY ARE...I MEAN, I'M NOT INTO THAT MYSELF...AND I'M NOT SUGGESTING THAT YOU ARE...IT'S JUST THAT...WELL, YOU HAVE THIS...
DOMINATRIX VIBE...
YEAH...HEH. SO, UM...LISTEN, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU ARE FREE THIS --

YEAH, NO! SORRY, ALLY, MIKE AND I HAVE SOMETHING TO DISCUSS.
BUT...
NOW!


SOOOO...ALLY, I GUESS YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOW ME THE BEST PLACE TO LEAVE THESE BOXES?
UMM...JUST DROP THEM ANYWHERE!


MY YOUNGER BROTHER LIKING ALLY, I WAS FINE WITH...


BUT MIKE...
WHAT?

DON'T YOU GIVE ME "WHAT!" WHAT THE FUCK WAS ALL THAT ABOUT?
OH COME ON, YOU SAID THAT SHE IS A COMPUTER WHIZ, AND MY LAPTOP HAS BEEN GLITCHNG UP, I JUST...

YOU ARE JUST A MARRIED MAN! THAT IS ALL THE "JUST" THAT YOU ARE.

SO, IS THIS YOUR WAY OF THANKING ME FOR HELPING YOU OUT TODAY?
YES!

MIKE, I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR MARRIAGE, BUT THIS BULLSHIT IS NEVER THE ANSWER.

TALK TO HER...
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, TALK TO ME!
I'LL...SEE.

HEY JIMMY, WE'RE OFF!
DAMN, MAN, I'M DOING SOMETHING HERE!
CAR OR WALK, CHOOSE!

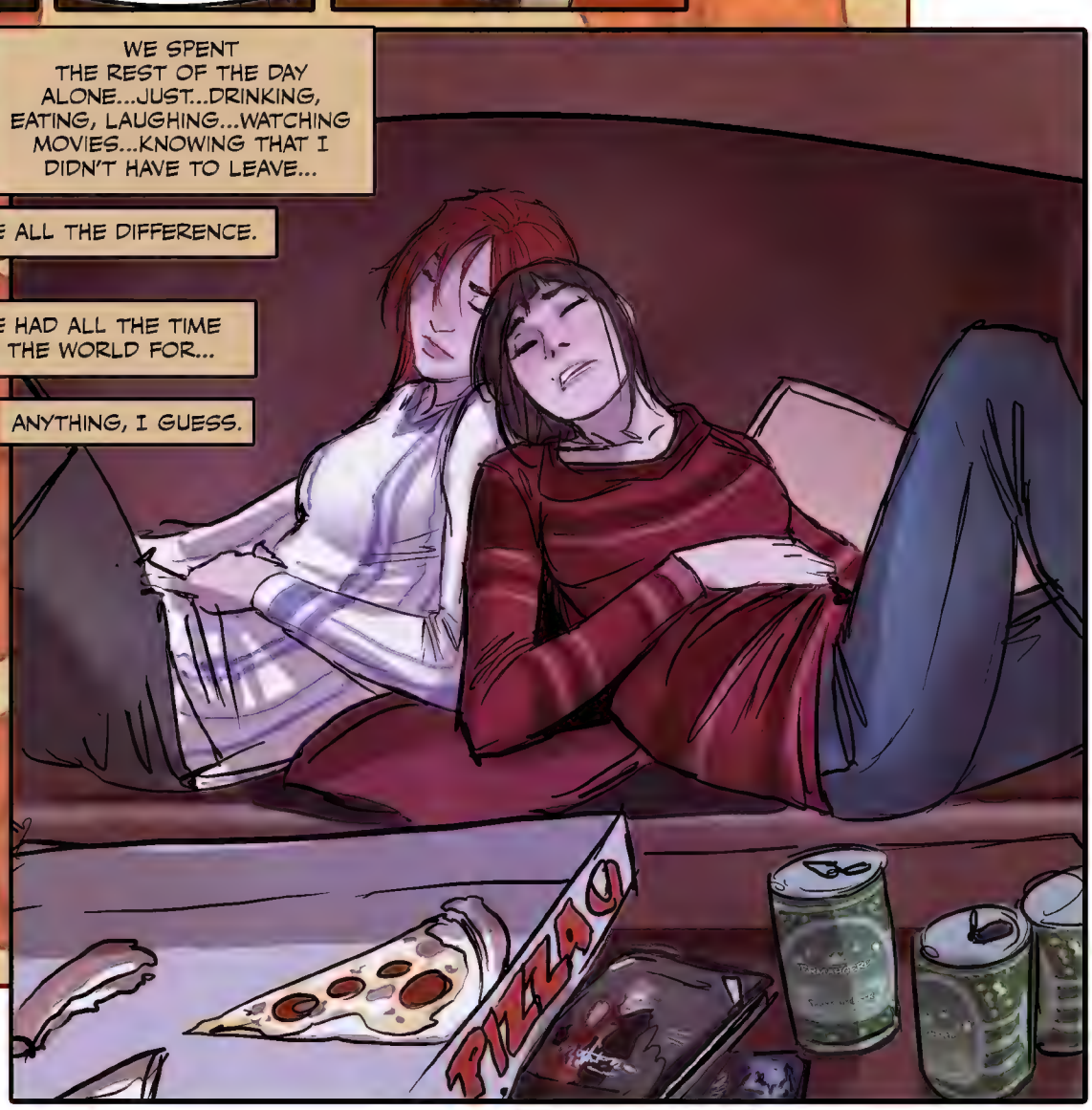
THANK YOU BOTH...FOR EVERYTHING. AND MIKE, YOU KNOW I'M A PHONE CALL AWAY.
BYE, ALLY!
C'YA, JIMMY!
YEAH...I MIGHT JUST TAKE YOU UP ON YOUR OFFER ONE OF THESE DAYS.

THAT ALLY SURE IS SOMETHING, HUH?
YEAH...

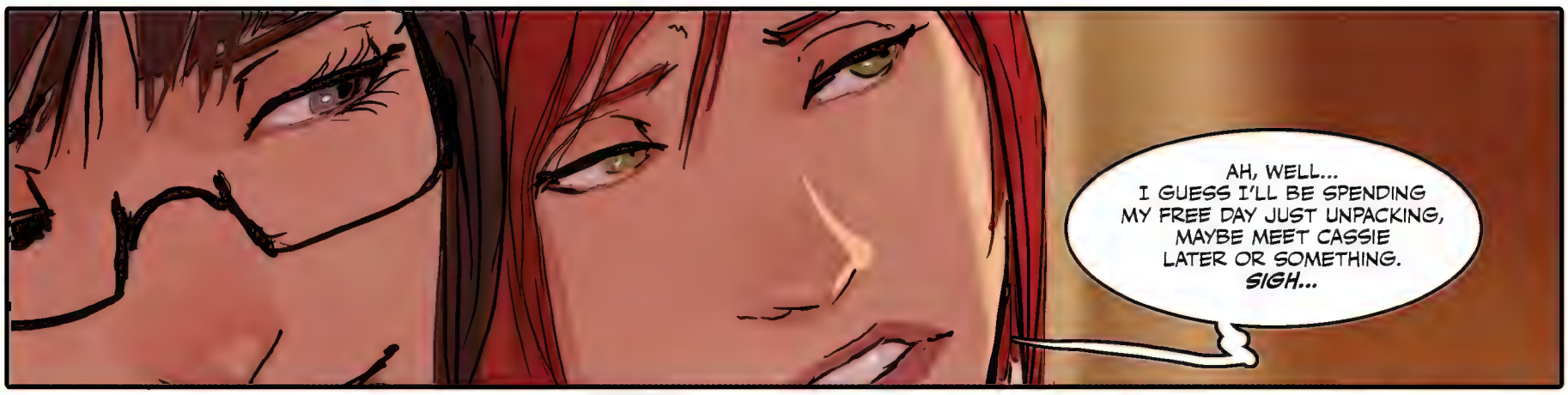
SO...
SOOO...
JIMMY IS CUTE...
YEAH...HE SEEMS TO LIKE YOU, TOO.
JEALOUS?
BITE ME!
PATIENCE!

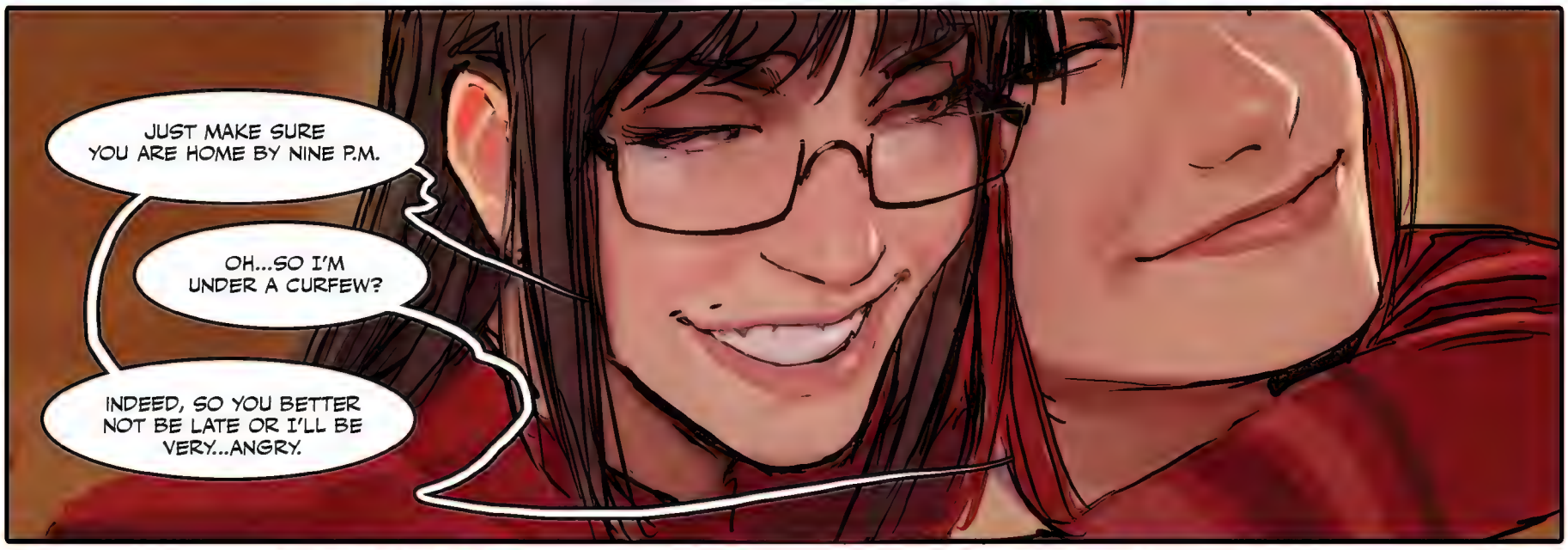
ANYHOOO...WELCOME HOME...ANY IDEAS FOR A MOVE-IN PARTY?

A FEW...

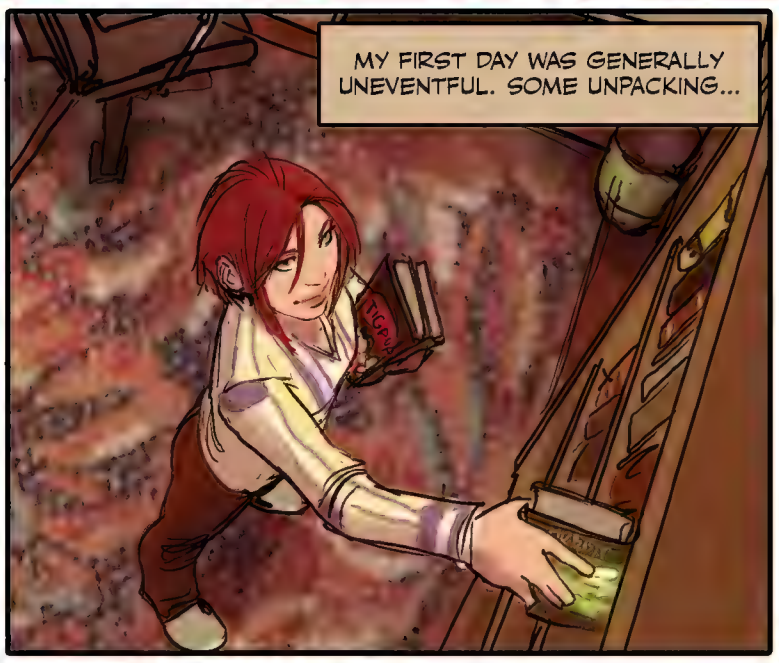

WE SPENT THE REST OF THE DAY ALONE...JUST...DRINKING, EATING, LAUGHING...WATCHING MOVIES...KNOWING THAT I DIDN'T HAVE TO LEAVE...
IT MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.
WE HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD FOR...
ANYTHING, I GUESS.
PIZZA

UGH...
KRAK
...KAAAYYY...
CRIC
AWWW, COME OOON!
KRAK
MY NECK HURTS JUST LOOKING AT YOU.
KA-POP
OH, QUIT WHINING! I SLEPT WEIRDLY ON THIS FRIGGIN COUCH, I GOTTA GET THIS UNDISCIPLINED SPINE-O-MINE BACK IN LINE.
UGH...YEAH, I'M A BIT CRAMPED UP MYSELF...SIGH... AND I GOTTA GO TO A MEETING.
PLAY SICK!
DEADLINES DON'T CARE ABOUT SICK.


AH, WELL... I GUESS I'LL BE SPENDING MY FREE DAY JUST UNPACKING, MAYBE MEET CASSIE LATER OR SOMETHING. SIGH...

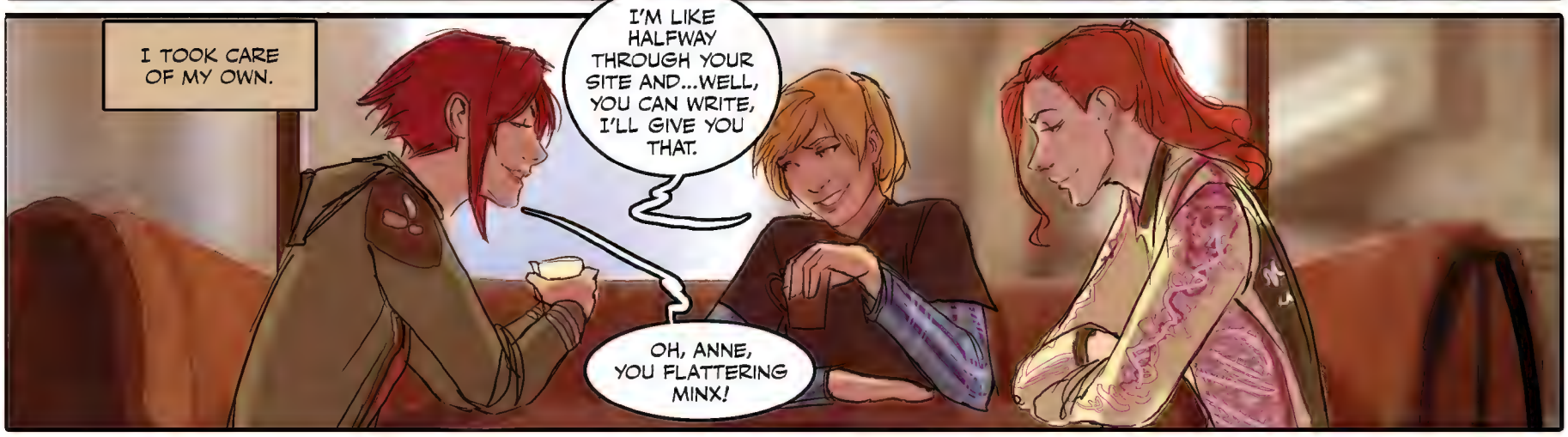

JUST MAKE SURE YOU ARE HOME BY NINE P.M.
OH...SO I'M UNDER A CURFEW?
INDEED, SO YOU BETTER NOT BE LATE OR I'LL BE VERY...ANGRY.

NOTE TO SELF... BE BACK AT NINE-THIRTY...

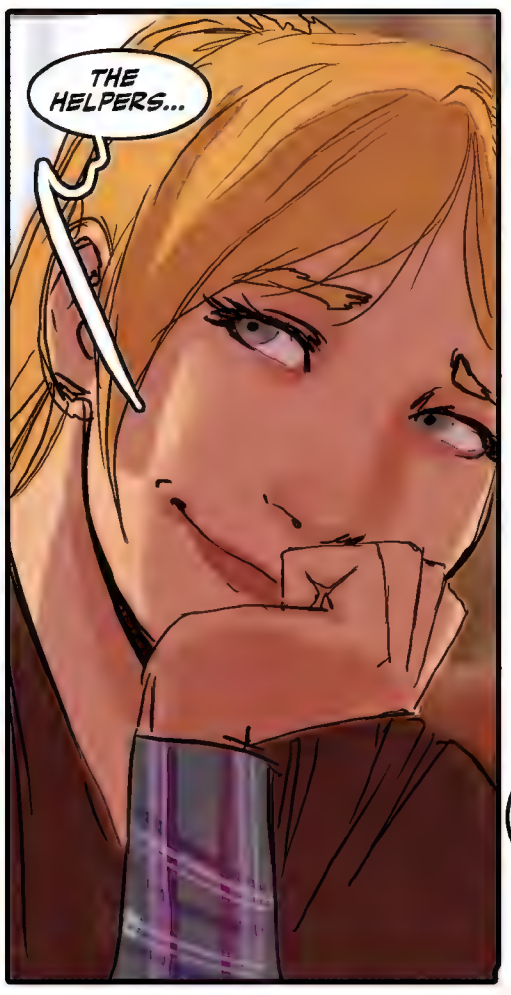

MY FIRST DAY WAS GENERALLY UNEVENTFUL. SOME UNPACKING...

WASTING TIME ONLINE...

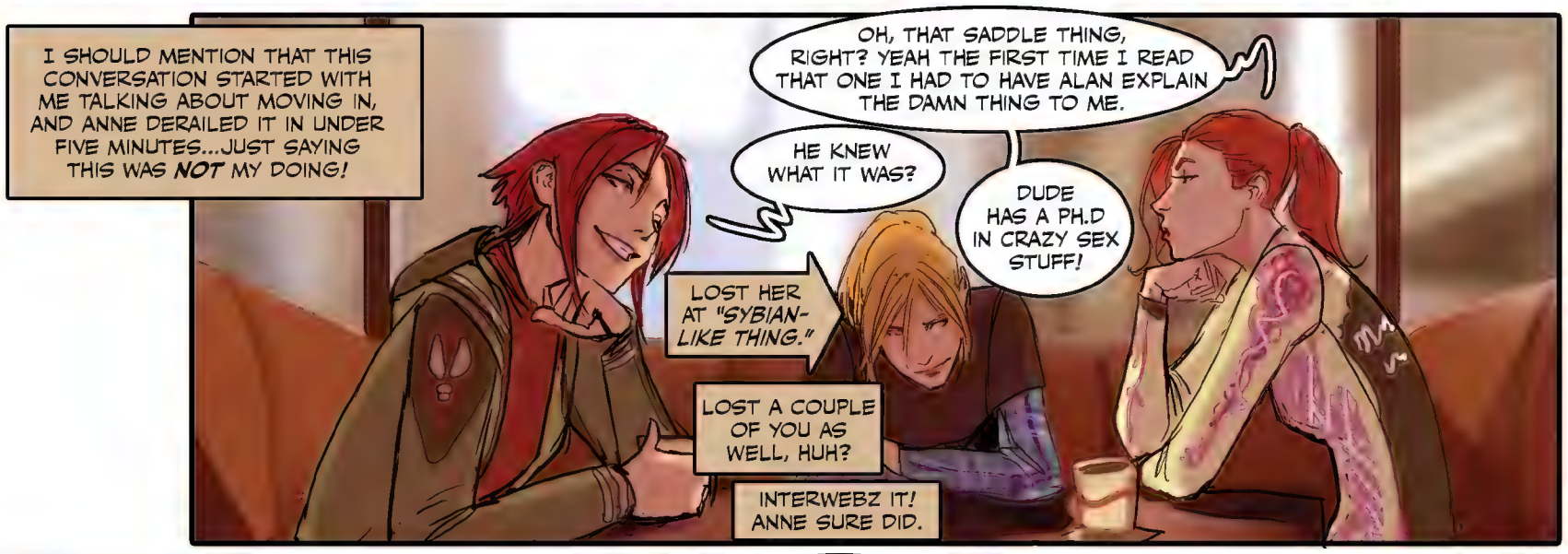
AND WHILE ALLY WAS HANDLING HER MEETINGS...

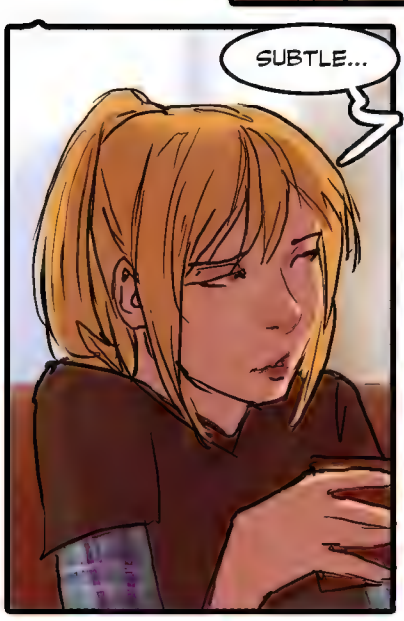

I TOOK CARE OF MY OWN.
I'M LIKE HALFWAY THROUGH YOUR SITE AND...WELL, YOU CAN WRITE, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
OH, ANNE, YOU FLATTERING MINX!

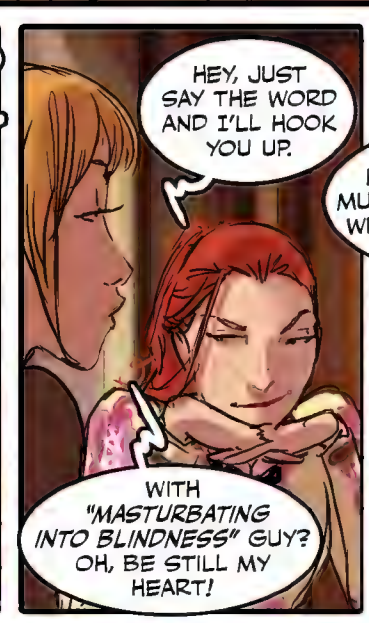
ANNND... WHICH WAS YOUR FAVORITE STORY SO FAR?

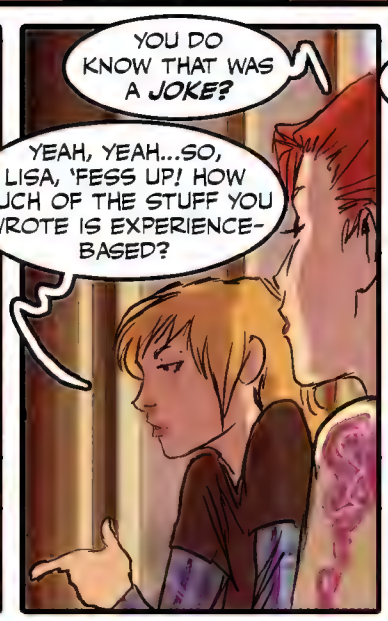

THE HELPERS...

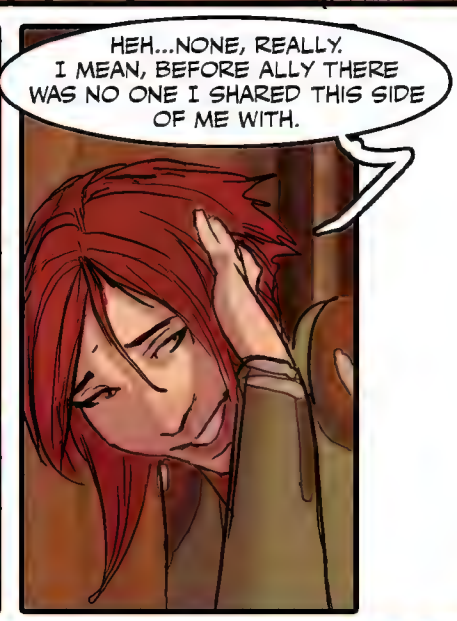
UM...SO I GOTTA ASK, THE PART WITH THE GIRLS BOUND TOGETHER RIDING THAT TIMED THING...IS THAT FROM EXPERIENCE, OR?
HEH...NO. Y'KNOW, SOMETIMES I SEE SOME TOYS ONLINE, AND I KINDA BUILD A SCENE AROUND THEM. BUT IT'S JUST A FANCY SYBIAN-LIKE THING.

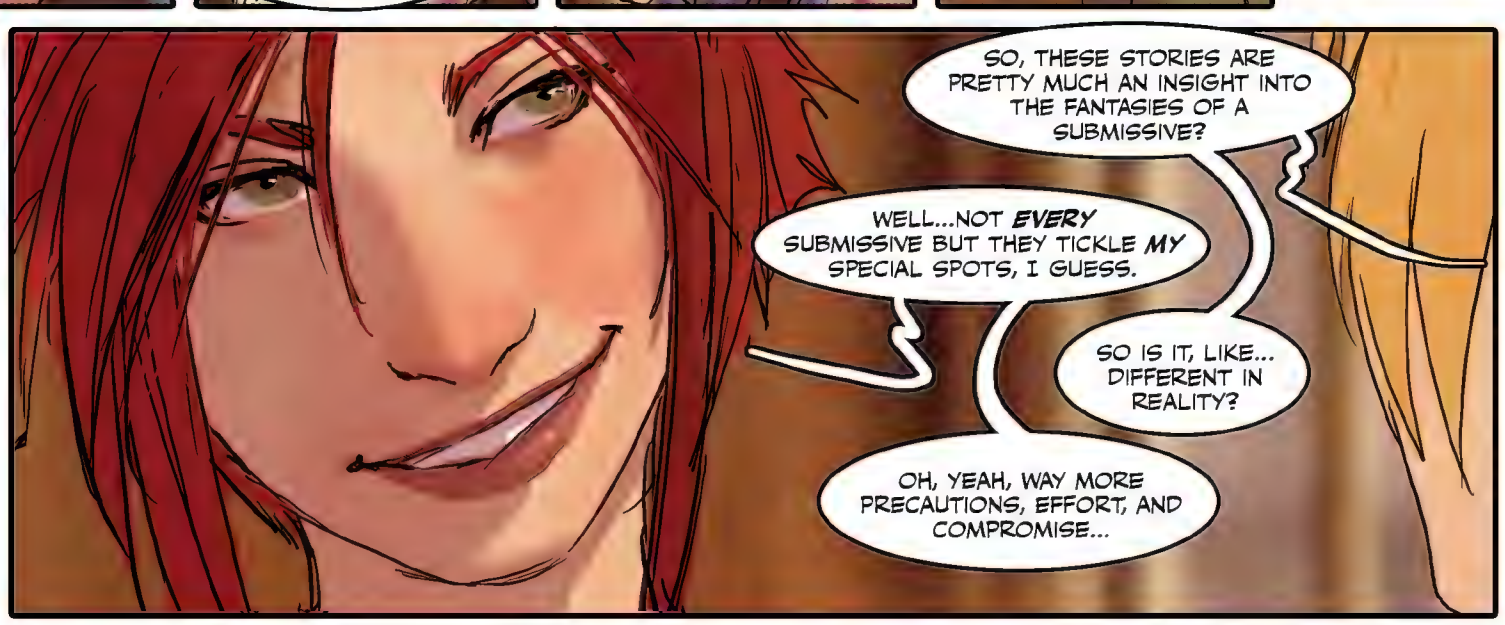

I SHOULD MENTION THAT THIS CONVERSATION STARTED WITH ME TALKING ABOUT MOVING IN, AND ANNE DERAILED IT IN UNDER FIVE MINUTES...JUST SAYING THIS WAS NOT MY DOING!
OH, THAT SADDLE THING, RIGHT? YEAH THE FIRST TIME I READ THAT ONE I HAD TO HAVE ALAN EXPLAIN THE DAMN THING TO ME.
HE KNEW WHAT IT WAS?
DUDE HAS A PH.D IN CRAZY SEX STUFF!
LOST HER AT "SYBIAN-LIKE THING."
LOST A COUPLE OF YOU AS WELL, HUH?
INTERWEBZ IT! ANNE SURE DID.


SUBTLE...


HEY, JUST SAY THE WORD AND I'LL HOOK YOU UP.
WITH "MASTURBATING INTO BLINDNESS" GUY? OH, BE STILL MY HEART!


YOU DO KNOW THAT WAS A JOKE?
YEAH, YEAH...SO, LISA, 'FESS UP! HOW MUCH OF THE STUFF YOU WROTE IS EXPERIENCE-BASED?

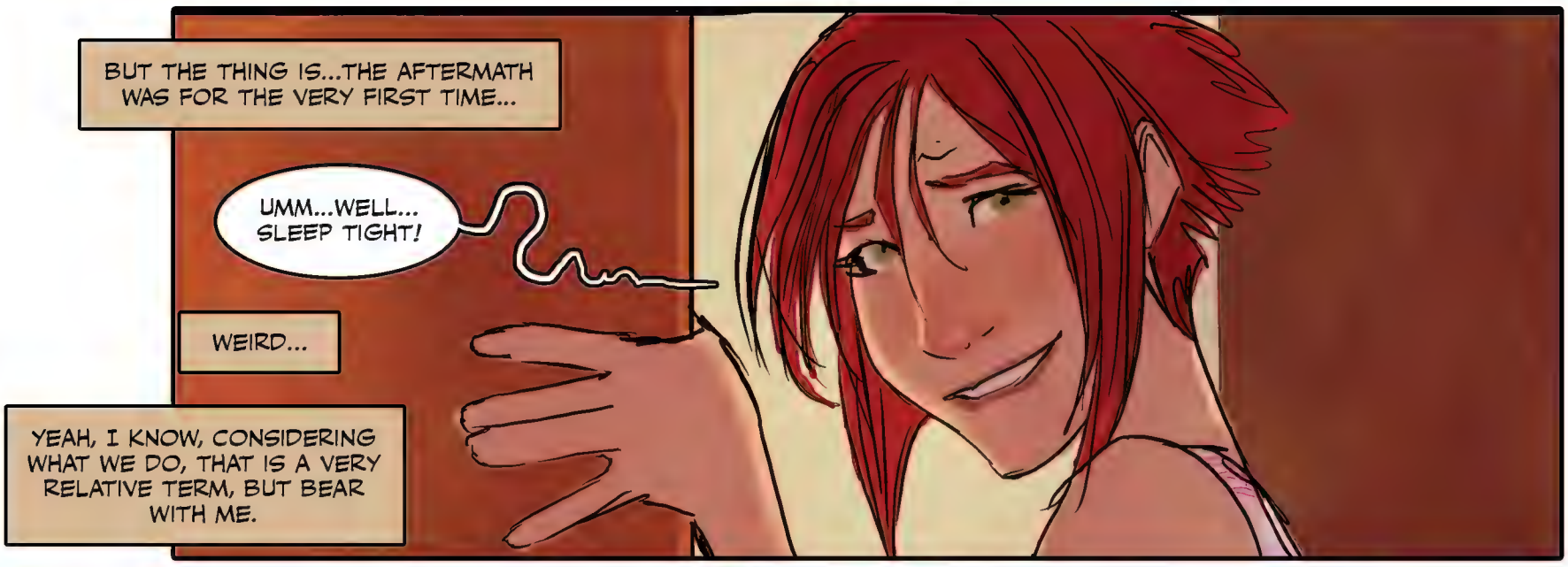

HEH...NONE, REALLY. I MEAN, BEFORE ALLY THERE WAS NO ONE I SHARED THIS SIDE OF ME WITH.

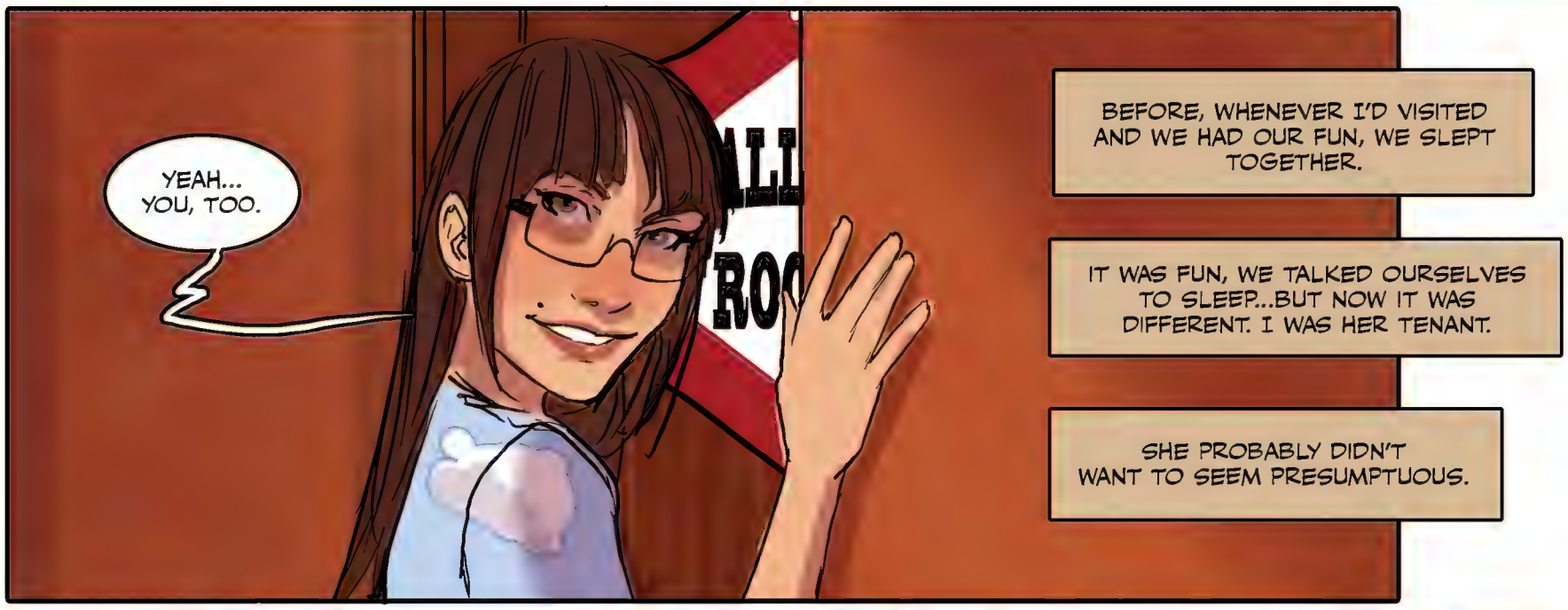

SO, THESE STORIES ARE PRETTY MUCH AN INSIGHT INTO THE FANTASIES OF A SUBMISSIVE?
WELL...NOT EVERY SUBMISSIVE BUT THEY TICKLE MY SPECIAL SPOTS, I GUESS.
SO IS IT, LIKE... DIFFERENT IN REALITY?
OH, YEAH, WAY MORE PRECAUTIONS, EFFORT, AND COMPROMISE...

AND A WHOLE LOT MORE ROLEPLAYING.
REALLY, WITH THE BOW TIES? A LITTLE TACKY, DON'T YOU THINK?
I SEE...SO FIRST YOU ARE LATE, AND THEN YOU THINK YOU ARE ENTITLED TO GIVE ME LIP ABOUT MY FASHION CHOICES?
OH, I THINK NOT, MISSIE!
DID I MENTION THAT WE SERVED OUR ROLEPLAYING PIZZAS WITH EXTRA CHEESE?

I LOVED IT!
NOW, LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT LIP OF YOURS!
YES... MISTRESS.
SEE, THE THING ABOUT THIS WHOLE ROLEPLAYING BUSINESS WAS...WELL, IT HAD A PURPOSE...
I BET YOU THOUGHT IT WAS REAL FUNNY TO KEEP ME WAITING LIKE THAT... TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES LATE...OOOH NO... WE CAN'T HAVE THAT!
MNUH!!!
COME ALONG, NOW! TIME TO TEACH YOU A LESSON IN PUNCTUALITY!
IT WAS THERE TO HELP US MENTALLY SINK INTO OUR ROLES, THE DOMME, AND THE SUBMISSIVE.
SURE, IT STARTED CHEESY, AND TONGUE-IN-CHEEK, BUT THEN YOU GET INTO THAT MINDSET.
LET'S MAKE IT A SLAP PER MINUTE, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
MMPF!
EXCELLENT!
SOME CALL THESE STATES OF MIND A SUBSPACE AND A DOMSPACE.
SLIPPING INTO THEM WAS POWERFUL...
IT WAS A TESTAMENT TO JUST HOW STRANGELY DIFFERENT THE SEXUAL MIND IS FROM THE RATIONAL.
ON AN AVERAGE MOMENT I WAS LISA, A WRITER/WAITRESS. I'D CONSIDER MYSELF OPINIONATED, ARGUMENTATIVE, OFTEN SARCASTIC...
BUT DURING OUR SEXY TIMES, IN MY SUBSPACE I WAS HER SUBMISSIVE... A PLAYTHING, A WILLING PARTICIPANT IN HER DEVIOUS EXPERIMENTS.
ALLY WAS A MILD-MANNERED PROGRAMMER (UNLESS SHE WAS GAMING). SHE WAS SMART, FUNNY -- SOMETIMES, A BIT OF A DUMBASS...
IN HER DOMSPACE SHE WAS DEVIOUS, AGGRESSIVE, AND YES, A BIT SADISTIC...
THE SEXUAL MIND... IT'S WEIRD, AND IT'S POWERFUL...

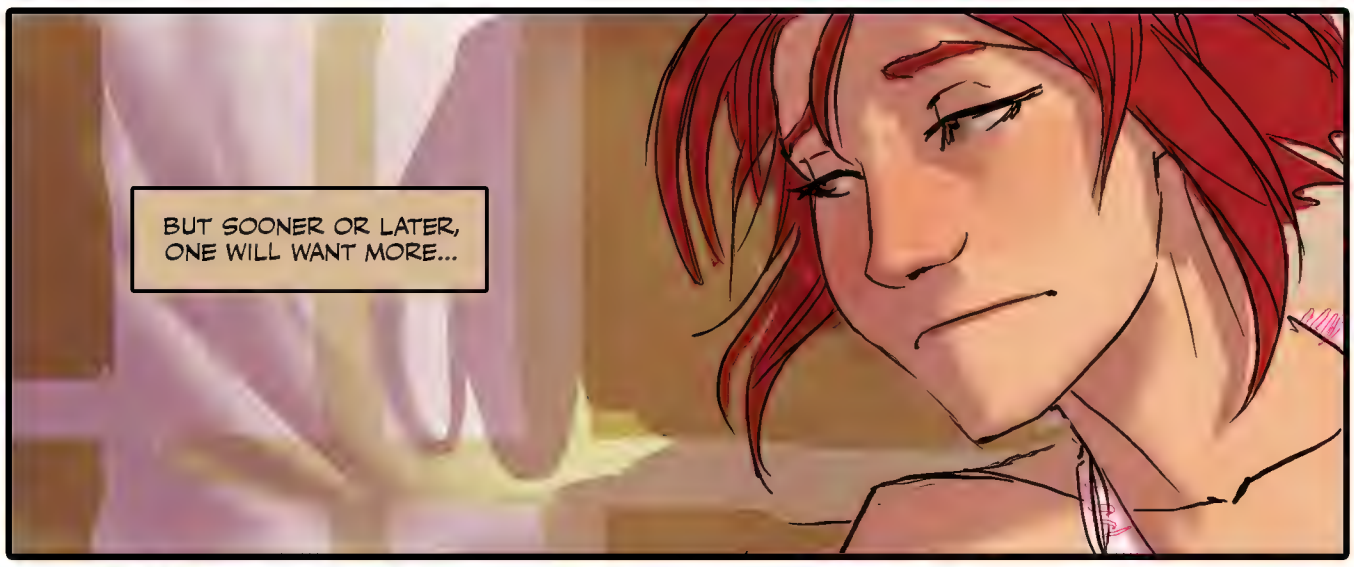
AND HERE IS THE KICKER...
REGULAR SEX...YOU CAN GIVE IN TO THAT SEXUAL SIDE OF YOURSELF.
I HAVE KNOWN A FEW FRIENDS WHO HAVE SCREAMED AWFUL THINGS AT THEIR PARNERS DURING SEX.
(EMBARRASSMENT CAME LATER.)
MY POINT IS, THEY CAN JUST ABANDON REASON AND GO FULLY CARNAL...
IN BDSM...AT LEAST ONE HAS TO KEEP THE REASON BUS GOING...
MNNGH!!!
USUALLY THAT'S THE DOMME.
YOU OKAY?
I REMEMBER THOSE DAYS WELL...
FIGURING OUT EACH OTHER'S LIMITS... LEARNING THE MOVES...
THAT VERY DAY, ALLY LEARNED JUST HOW MUCH PRESSURE SHE SHOULD APPLY WITH A STRAP-ON.
IT WAS HER FIRST TIME USING ONE...
THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A FIVE-MINUTE LAUGHING BREAK WHEN SHE ACTUALLY PUT IT ON...
HEH...FUNNY, THE SHIT YOU REMEMBER...
WEF! IF OFAW!
GOOD!
ANYHOO...I COULD SPEW YOU ALL SORTS OF NONSENSE ABOUT HER FERAL NATURE AND HOW SHE MADE ME FEEL UTTERLY HELPLESS AND AT HER MERCY, MELTING IN HER HANDS AND YADDAYADDA...

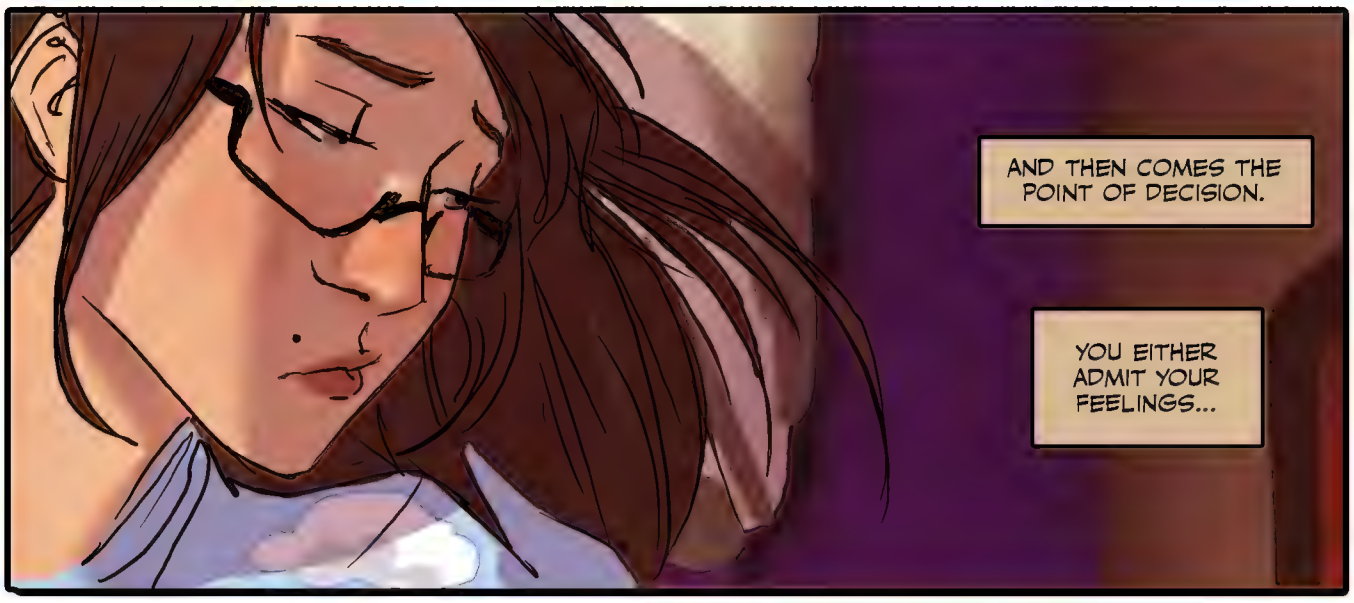

BUT THE THING IS...THE AFTERMATH WAS FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME...
UMM...WELL... SLEEP TIGHT!
WEIRD...
YEAH, I KNOW, CONSIDERING WHAT WE DO, THAT IS A VERY RELATIVE TERM, BUT BEAR WITH ME.

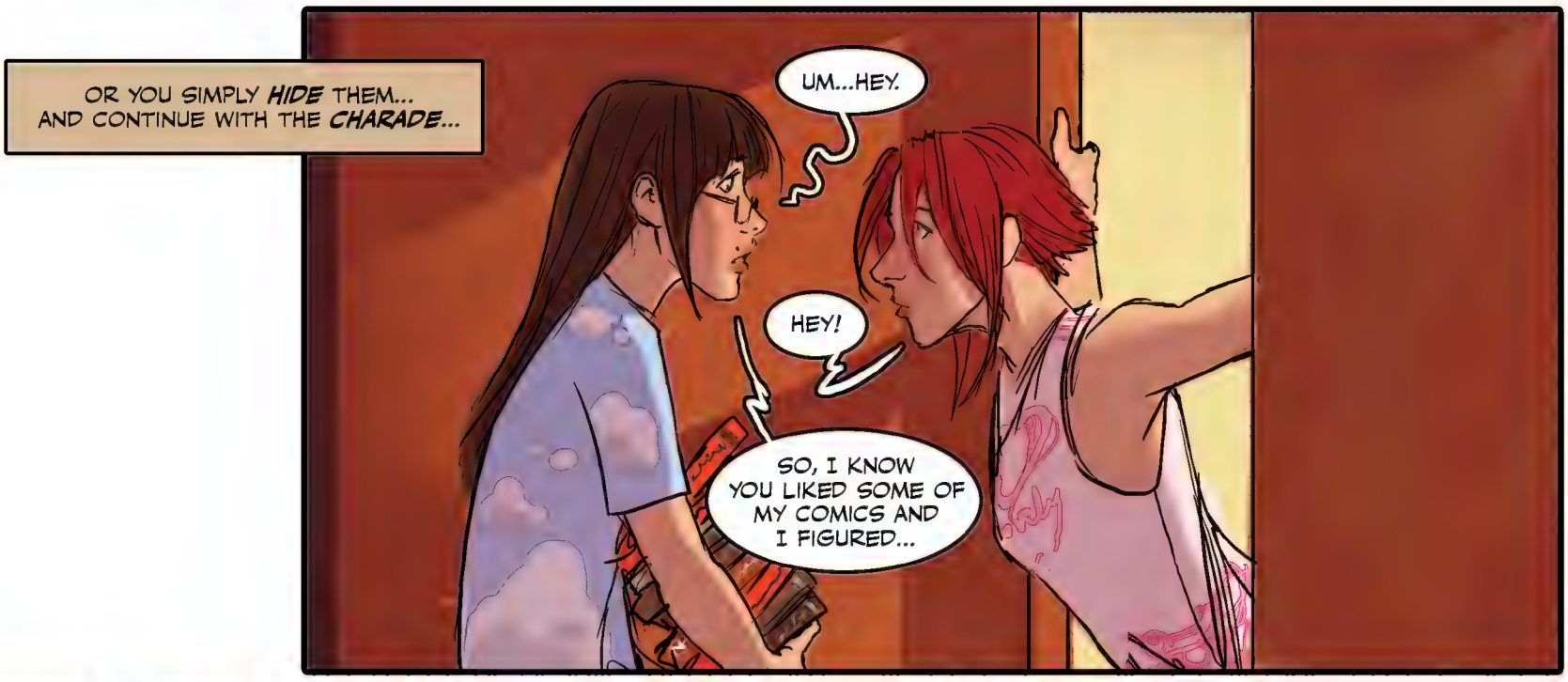

YEAH... YOU, TOO.
BEFORE, WHENEVER I'D VISITED AND WE HAD OUR FUN, WE SLEPT TOGETHER.
IT WAS FUN, WE TALKED OURSELVES TO SLEEP...BUT NOW IT WAS DIFFERENT. I WAS HER TENANT.
SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T WANT TO SEEM PRESUMPTUOUS.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, I HAD MY PLACE IN HER HOUSE...
AND...YEAH...THIS KINDA SUCKED.
SEE, VERY SOON WE WILL BOTH LEARN THAT THIS CAN'T LAST.

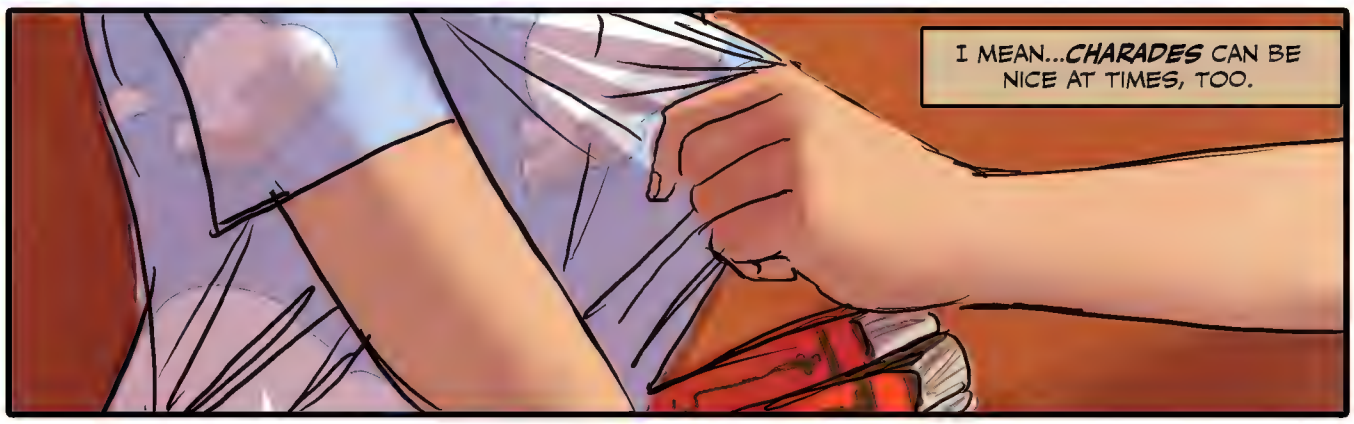
THE WHOLE "FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS" THING SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA IN THEORY...

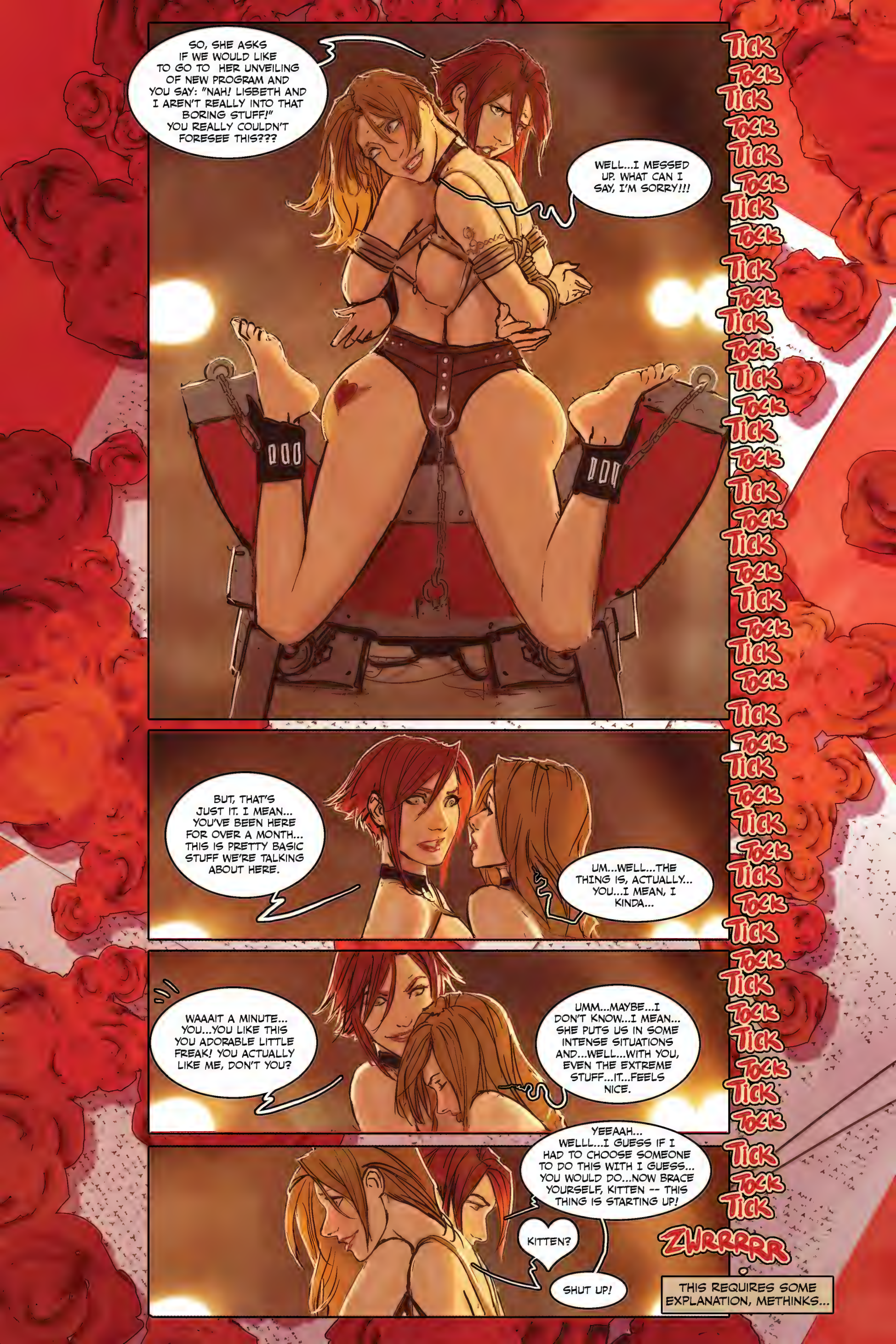

BUT SOONER OR LATER, ONE WILL WANT MORE...

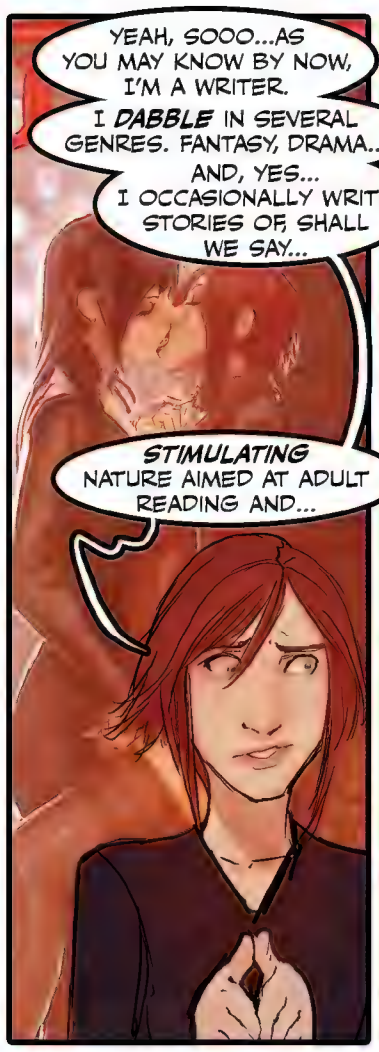

AND THEN COMES THE POINT OF DECISION.
YOU EITHER ADMIT YOUR FEELINGS...

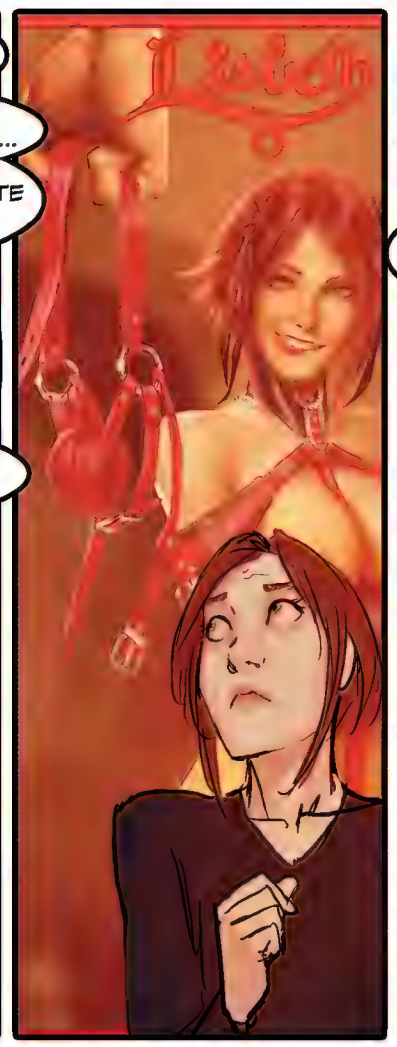

OR YOU SIMPLY *HIDE* THEM... AND CONTINUE WITH THE *CHARADE*...
UM...HEY.
HEY!
SO, I KNOW YOU LIKED SOME OF MY COMICS AND I FIGURED...

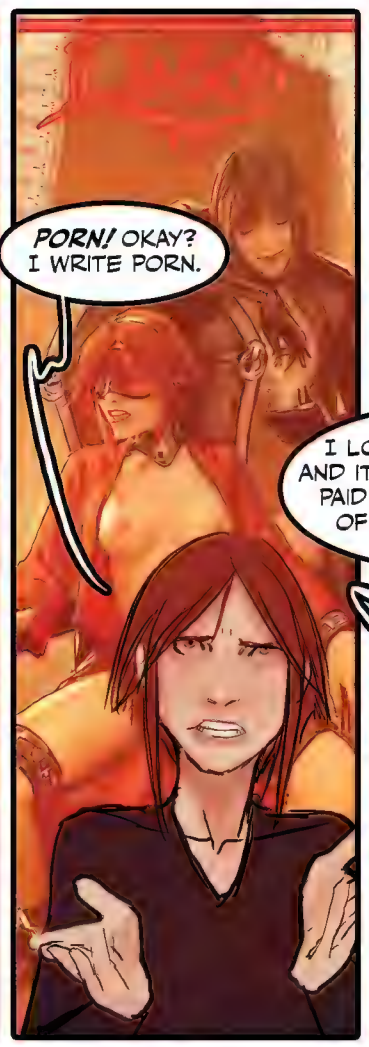
WELL...YOU KNOW, *READING* AND STUFF...
AND ALSO, THERE IS A *MONSTER* UNDER MY BED THAT MIGHT SCARE ME!
THAT TOO! WE CAN'T HAVE THAT!

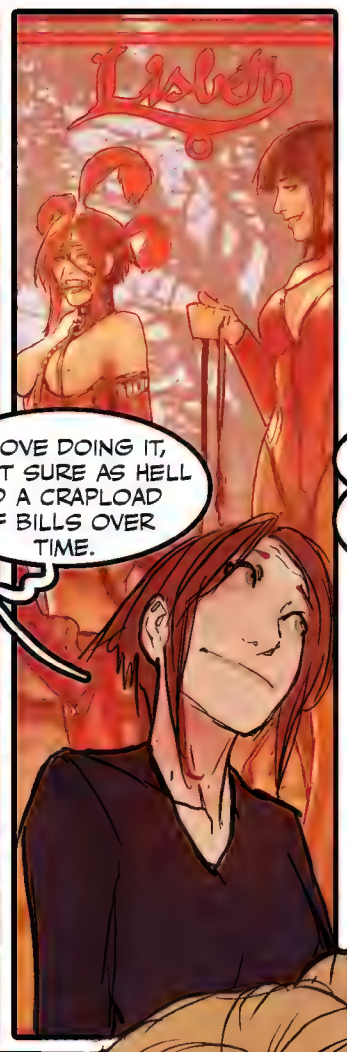

I MEAN...*CHARADES* CAN BE NICE AT TIMES, TOO.


SO, SHE ASKS IF WE WOULD LIKE TO GO TO HER UNVEILING OF NEW PROGRAM AND YOU SAY: "NAH! LISBETH AND I AREN'T REALLY INTO THAT BORING STUFF!" YOU REALLY COULDN'T FORESEE THIS???
WELL...I MESSED UP. WHAT CAN I SAY, I'M SORRY!!!
BUT, THAT'S JUST IT. I MEAN... YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR OVER A MONTH... THIS IS PRETTY BASIC STUFF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE.
UM...WELL...THE THING IS, ACTUALLY... YOU...I MEAN, I KINDA...
WAAAIT A MINUTE... YOU...YOU LIKE THIS YOU ADORABLE LITTLE FREAK! YOU ACTUALLY LIKE ME, DON'T YOU?
UMM...MAYBE...I DON'T KNOW...I MEAN... SHE PUTS US IN SOME INTENSE SITUATIONS AND...WELL...WITH YOU, EVEN THE EXTREME STUFF...IT...FEELS NICE.
YEEAAH... WELLL...I GUESS IF I HAD TO CHOOSE SOMEONE TO DO THIS WITH I GUESS... YOU WOULD DO...NOW BRACE YOURSELF, KITTEN -- THIS THING IS STARTING UP!
KITTEN?
SHUT UP!
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

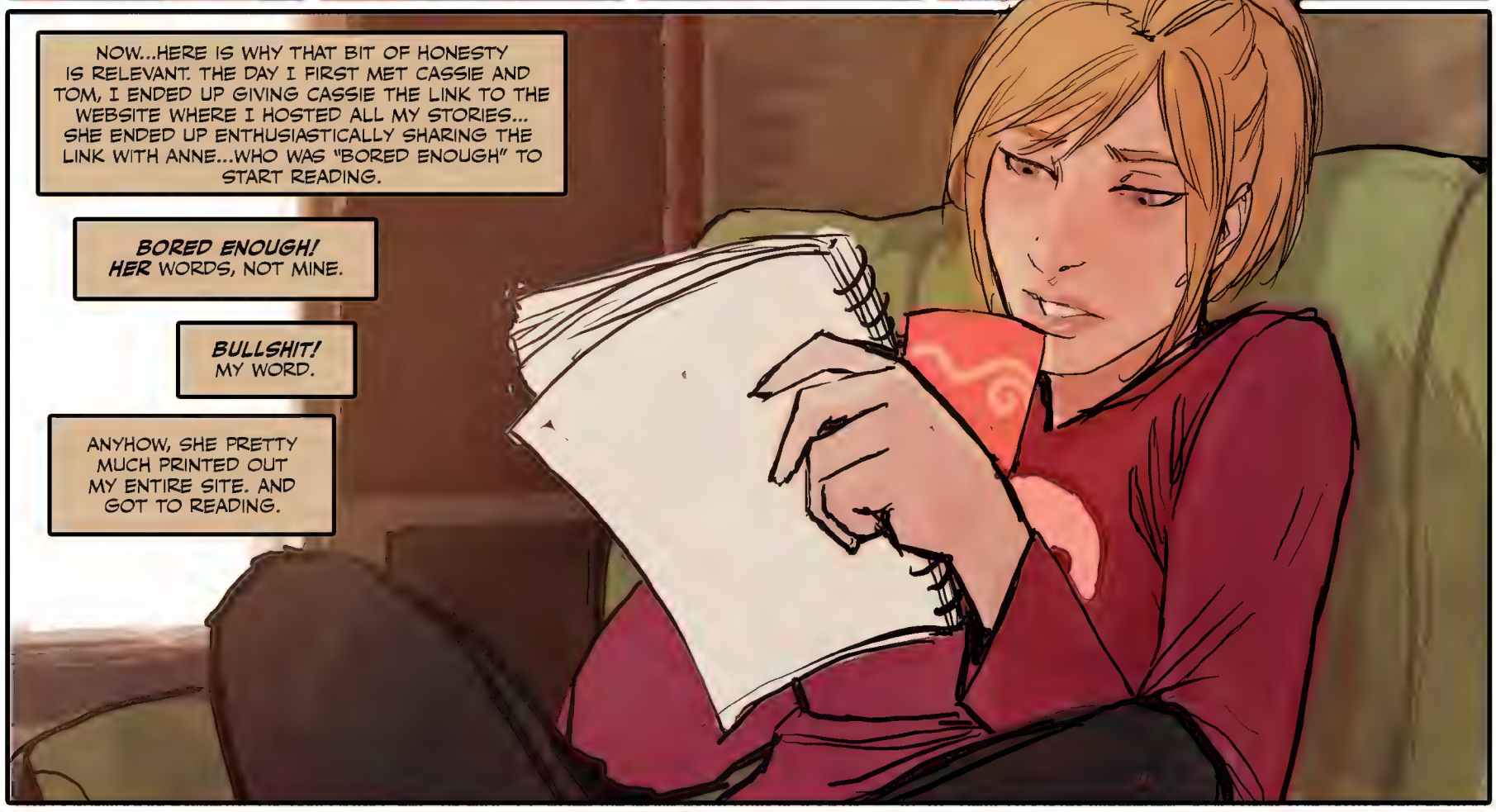

YEAH, SOOO...AS YOU MAY KNOW BY NOW, I'M A WRITER.
I DABBLE IN SEVERAL GENRES. FANTASY, DRAMA...
AND, YES... I OCCASIONALLY WRITE STORIES OF, SHALL WE SAY...
STIMULATING NATURE AIMED AT ADULT READING AND...

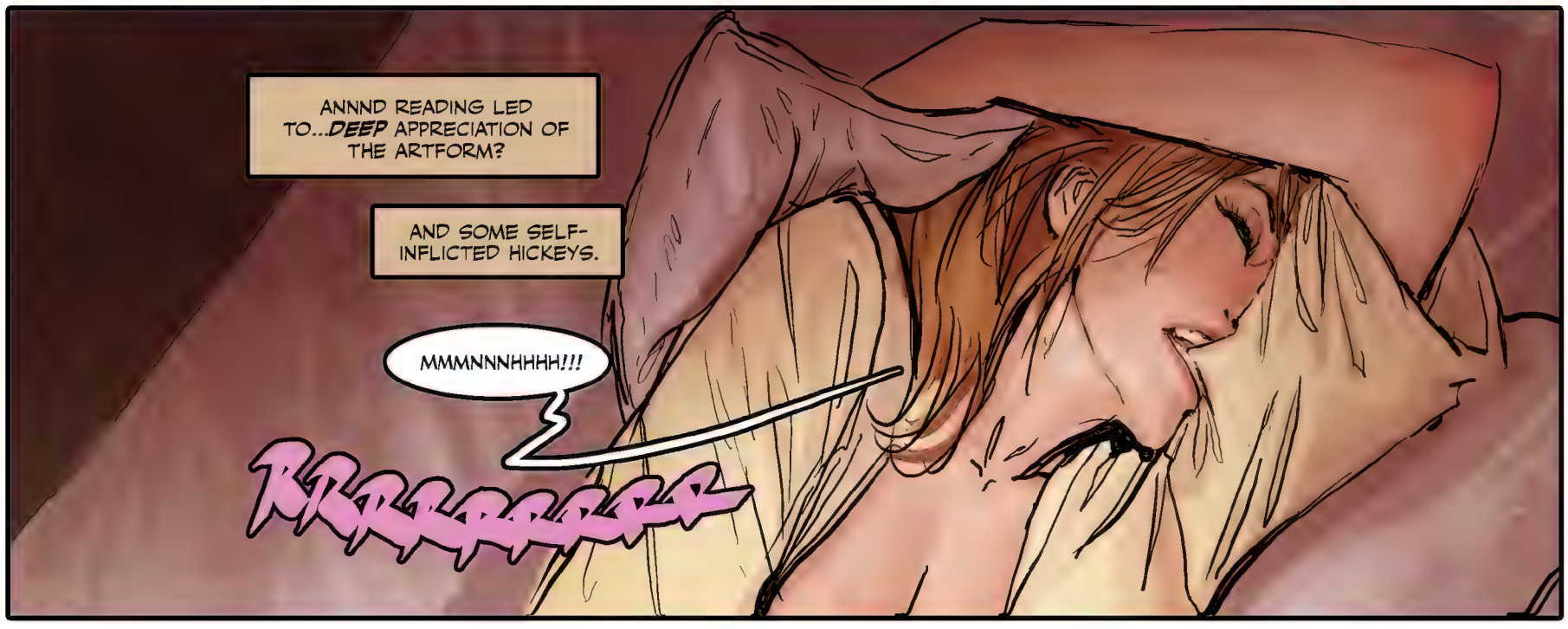



PORN! OKAY? I WRITE PORN.

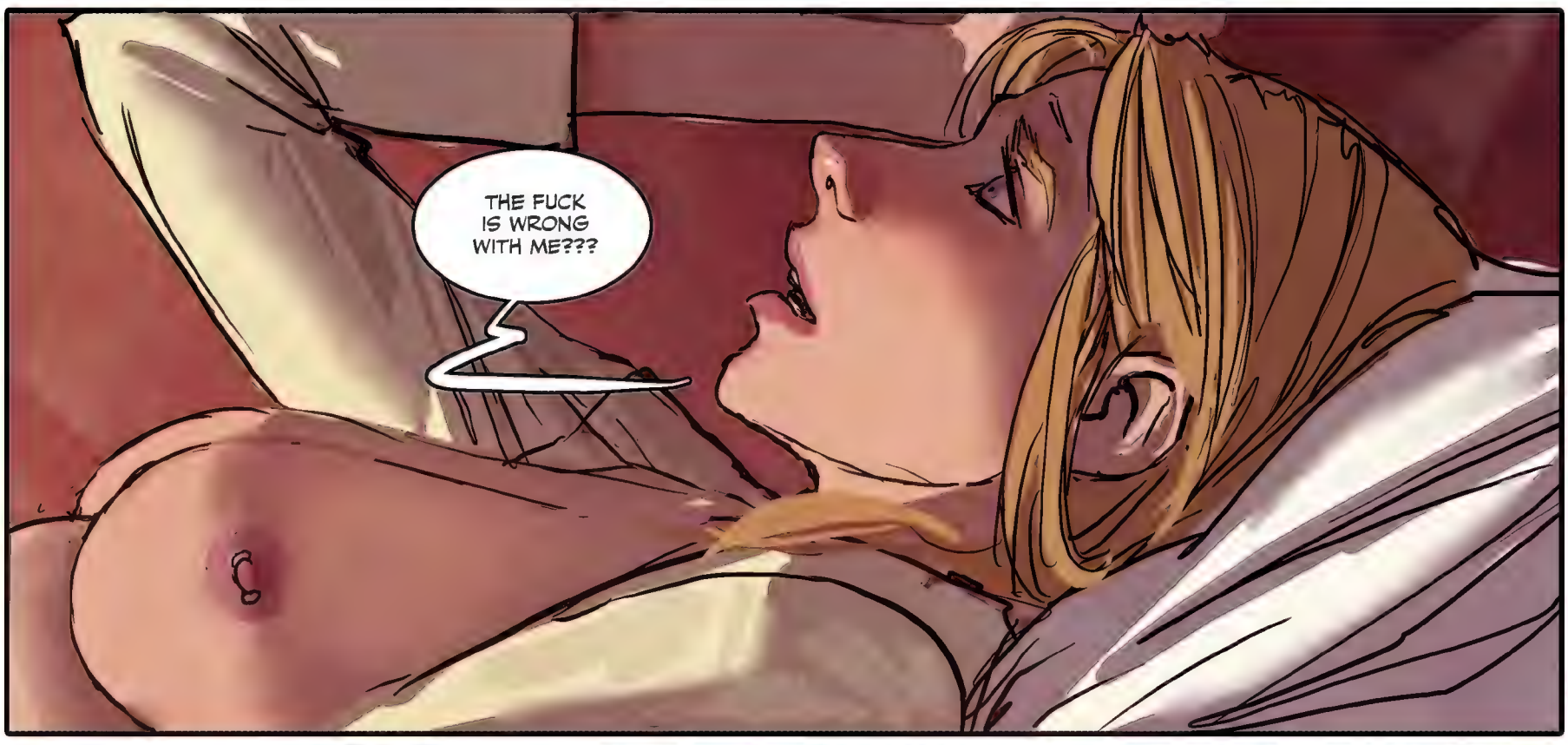

I LOVE DOING IT, AND IT SURE AS HELL PAID A CRAPLOAD OF BILLS OVER TIME.

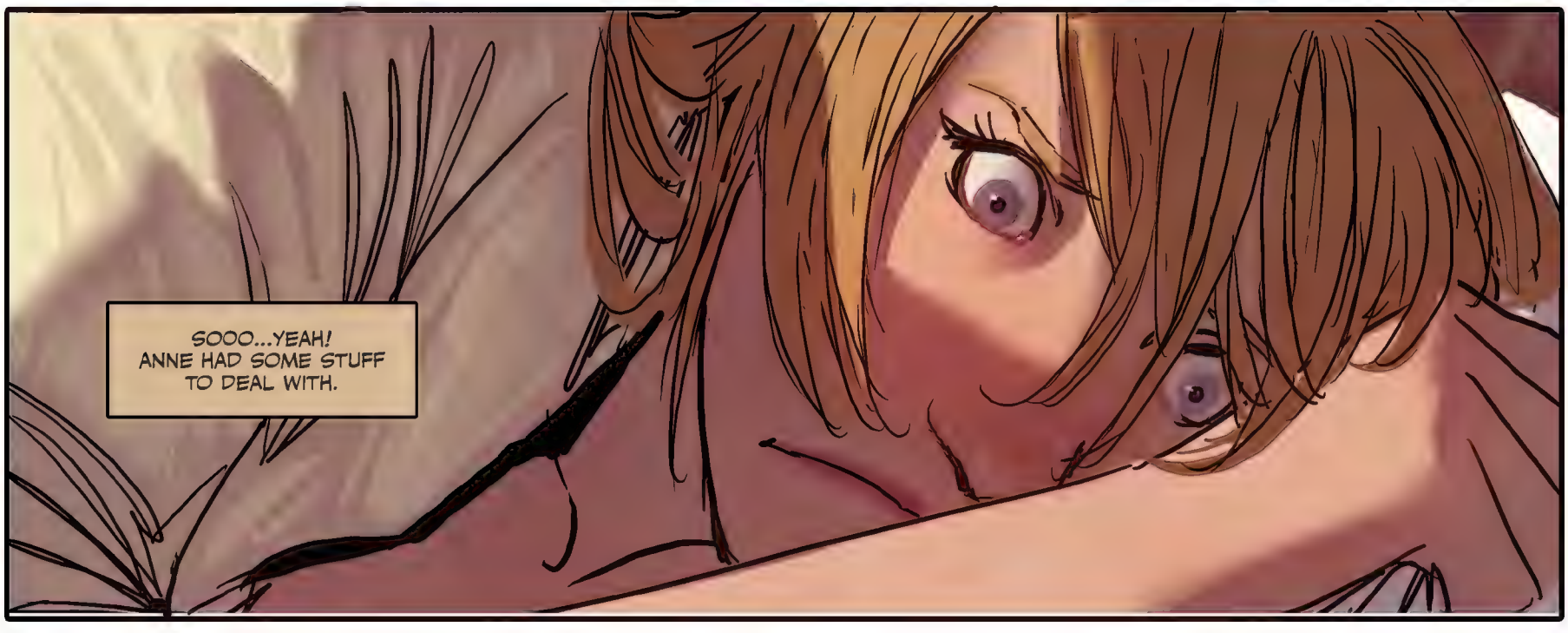
THERE...
'S WHAT I DO!

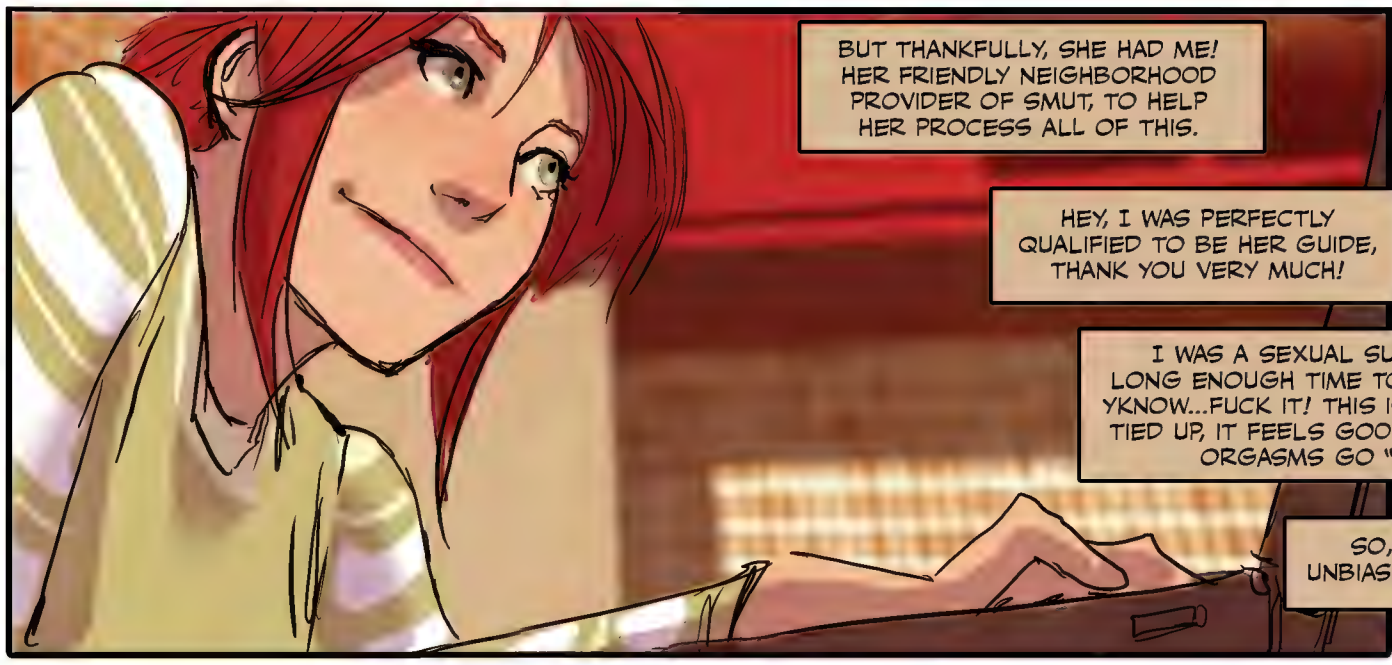

NOW...HERE IS WHY THAT BIT OF HONESTY IS RELEVANT. THE DAY I FIRST MET CASSIE AND TOM, I ENDED UP GIVING CASSIE THE LINK TO THE WEBSITE WHERE I HOSTED ALL MY STORIES... SHE ENDED UP ENTHUSIASTICALLY SHARING THE LINK WITH ANNE...WHO WAS "BORED ENOUGH" TO START READING.
BORED ENOUGH! HER WORDS, NOT MINE.
BULLSHIT! MY WORD.
ANYHOW, SHE PRETTY MUCH PRINTED OUT MY ENTIRE SITE. AND GOT TO READING.

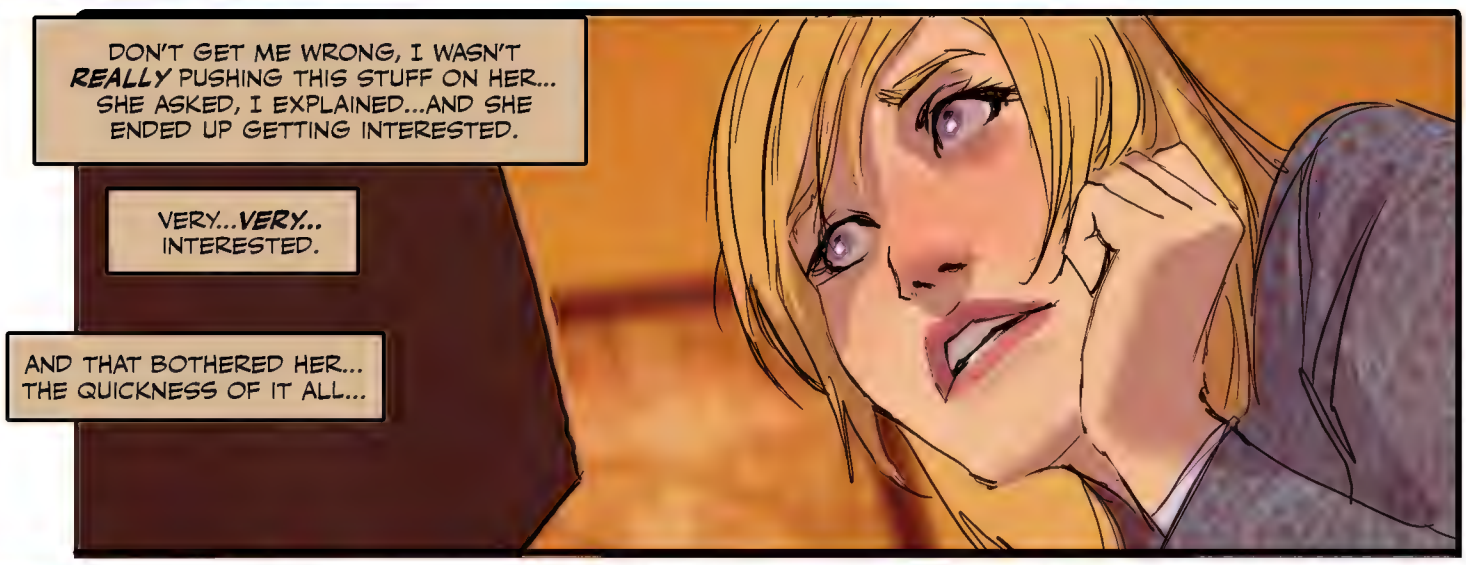

ANNND READING LED TO...DEEP APPRECIATION OF THE ARTFORM?
AND SOME SELF-INFLICTED HICKEYS.
MMMNNNHHHH!!!
RRRRRRRRRR

OH, GOD...

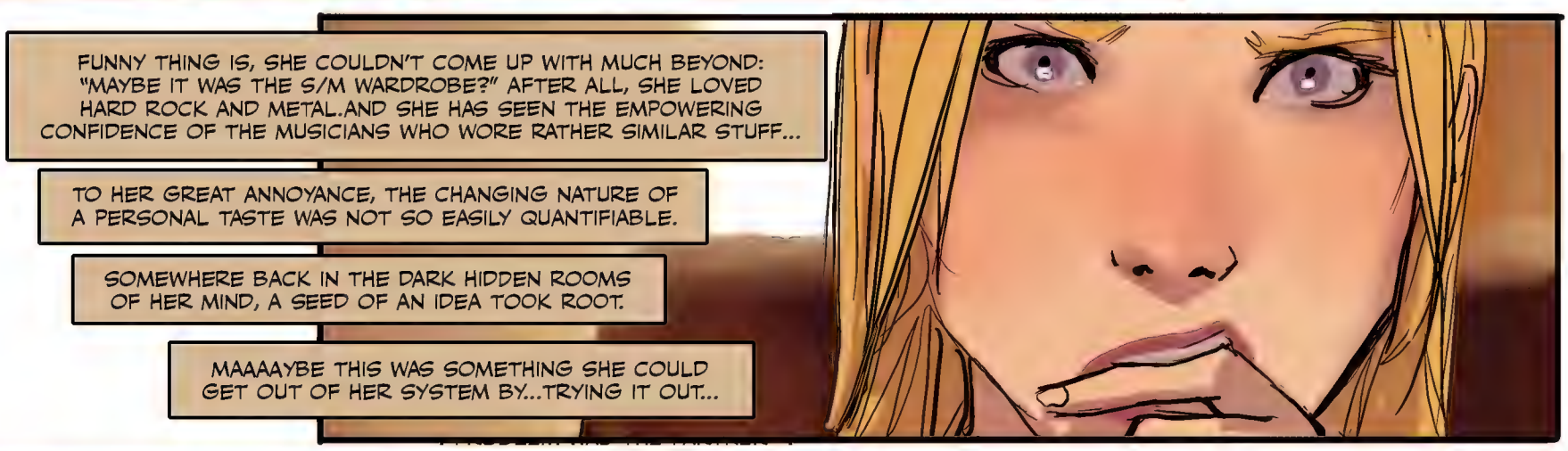

THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH ME???

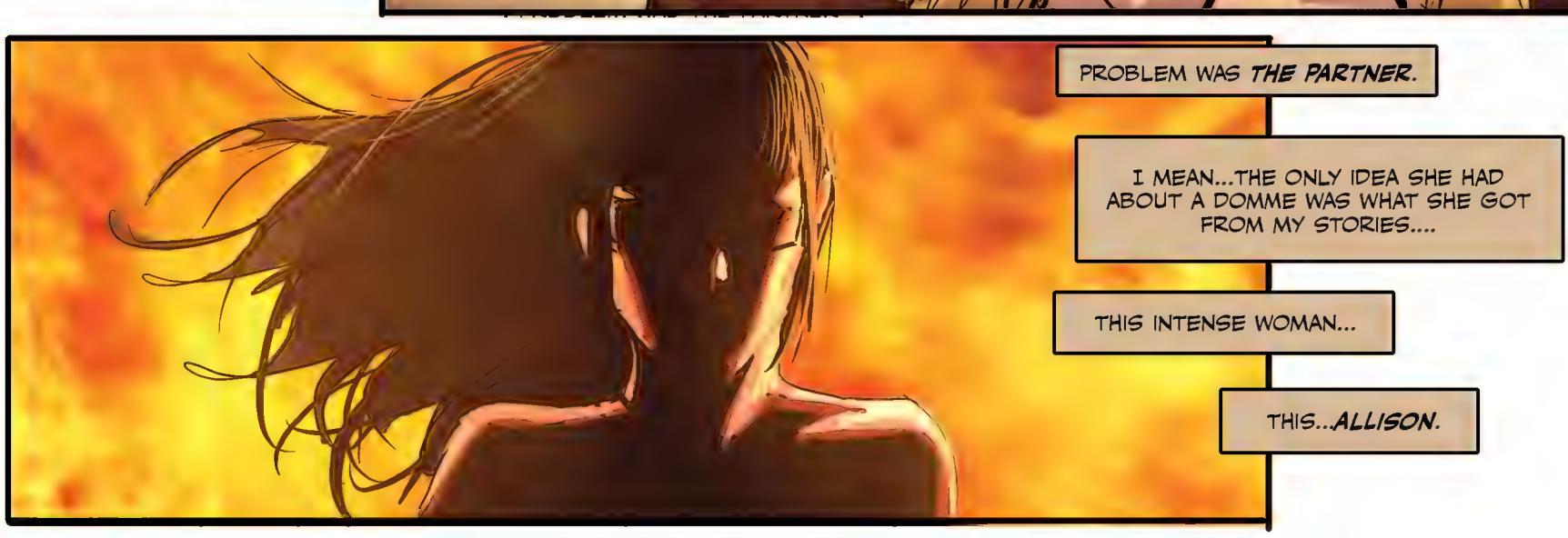

SOOO...YEAH! ANNE HAD SOME STUFF TO DEAL WITH.

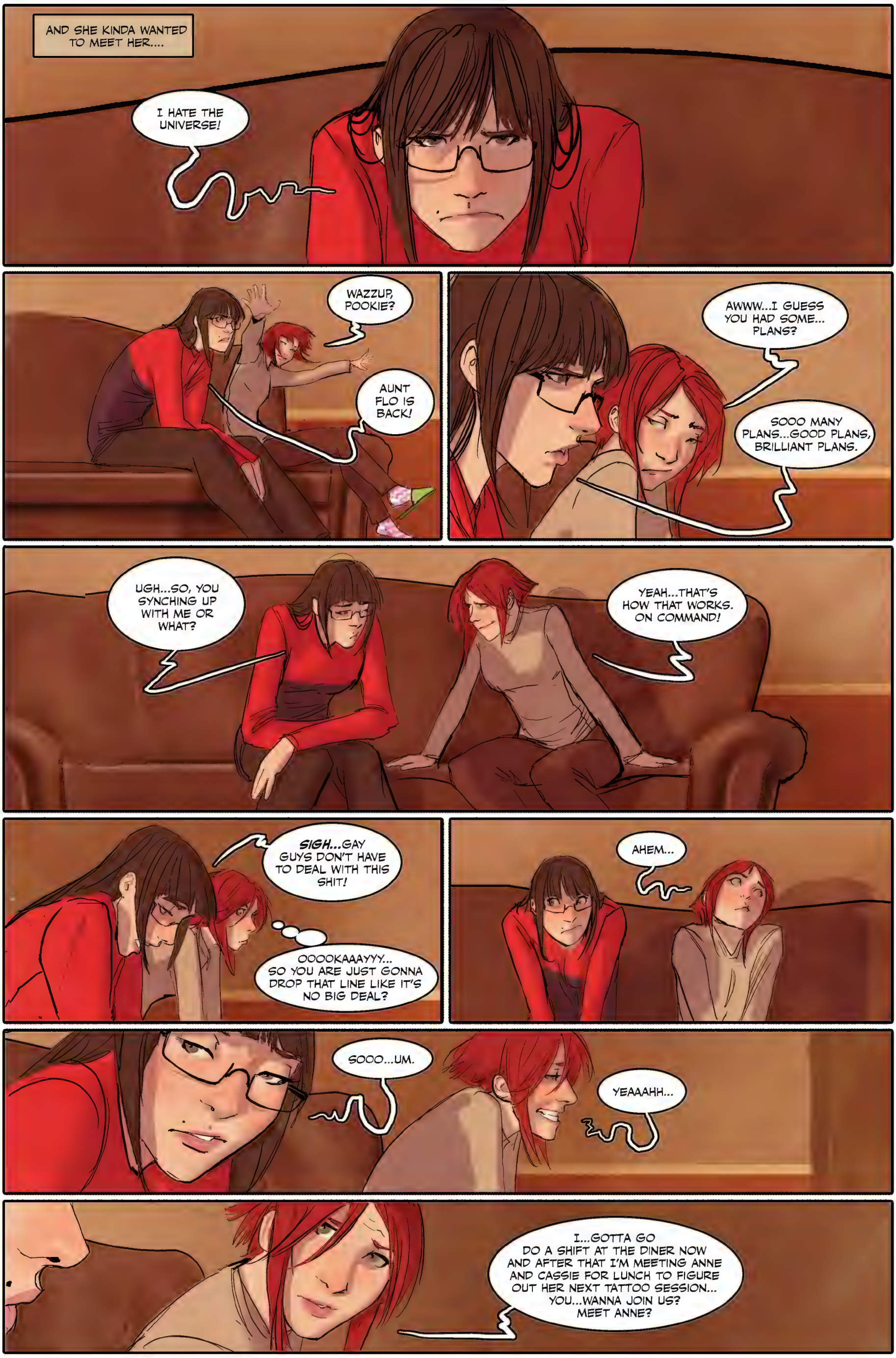

BUT THANKFULLY, SHE HAD ME! HER FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD PROVIDER OF SMUT, TO HELP HER PROCESS ALL OF THIS.
HEY, I WAS PERFECTLY QUALIFIED TO BE HER GUIDE, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
I WAS A SEXUAL SUBMISSIVE FOR A LONG ENOUGH TIME TO BE ABLE TO SAY... YKNOW...FUCK IT! THIS IS ME! I LIKE BEING TIED UP, IT FEELS GOOD AND IT MAKES MY ORGASMS GO "WEEEEEEE!"
SO, YEAH...OBJECTIVE AND UNBIASED GUIDANCE RIGHT HERE!


DON'T GET ME WRONG, I WASN'T REALLY PUSHING THIS STUFF ON HER... SHE ASKED, I EXPLAINED...AND SHE ENDED UP GETTING INTERESTED.
VERY...VERY... INTERESTED.
AND THAT BOTHERED HER... THE QUICKNESS OF IT ALL...

BUT THAT'S JUST IT. PEOPLE CHANGE.
TASTES CHANGE! SOMETIMES IT TAKES A LONG TIME, AT OTHER TIMES IT'S SUDDEN.
SO, ANNE DID WHAT MANY AT SOME POINT DO WHEN WE GET HIT BY A CRISIS OF SELF-IMAGE...SHE TRIED RATIONALIZING IT.

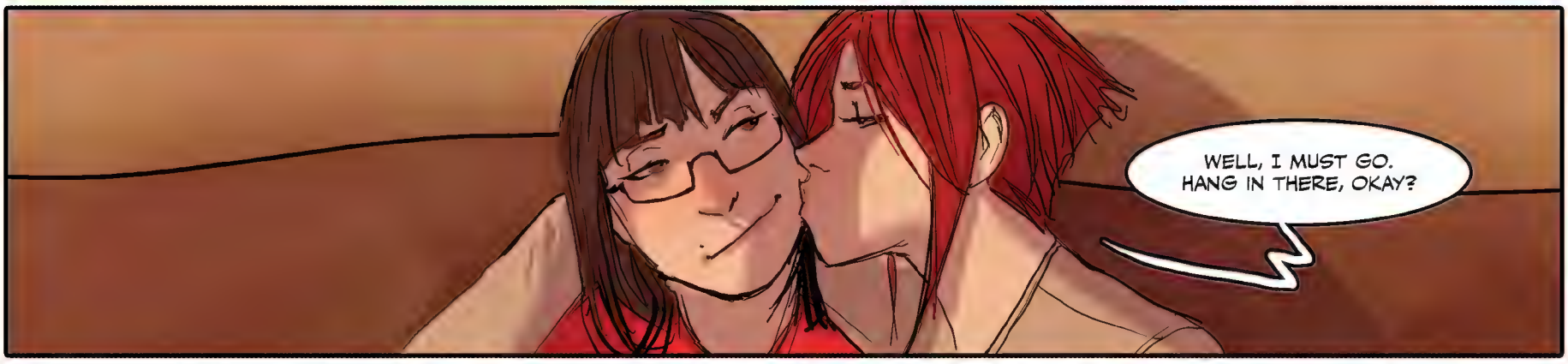

FUNNY THING IS, SHE COULDN'T COME UP WITH MUCH BEYOND: "MAYBE IT WAS THE S/M WARDROBE?" AFTER ALL, SHE LOVED HARD ROCK AND METAL.AND SHE HAS SEEN THE EMPOWERING CONFIDENCE OF THE MUSICIANS WHO WORE RATHER SIMILAR STUFF...
TO HER GREAT ANNOYANCE, THE CHANGING NATURE OF A PERSONAL TASTE WAS NOT SO EASILY QUANTIFIABLE.
SOMEWHERE BACK IN THE DARK HIDDEN ROOMS OF HER MIND, A SEED OF AN IDEA TOOK ROOT.
MAAAAYBE THIS WAS SOMETHING SHE COULD GET OUT OF HER SYSTEM BY...TRYING IT OUT...

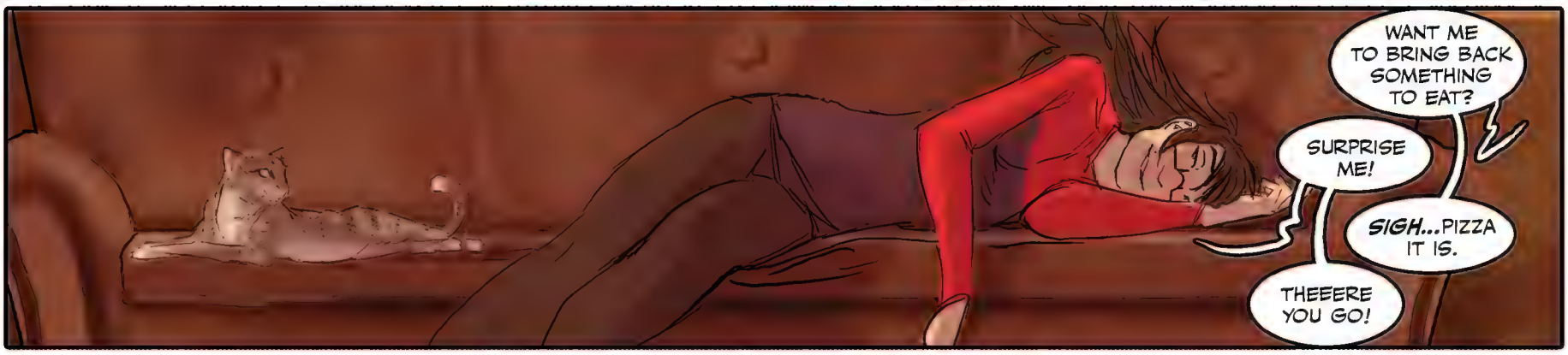

PROBLEM WAS THE PARTNER.
I MEAN...THE ONLY IDEA SHE HAD ABOUT A DOMME WAS WHAT SHE GOT FROM MY STORIES....
THIS INTENSE WOMAN...
THIS...ALLISON.

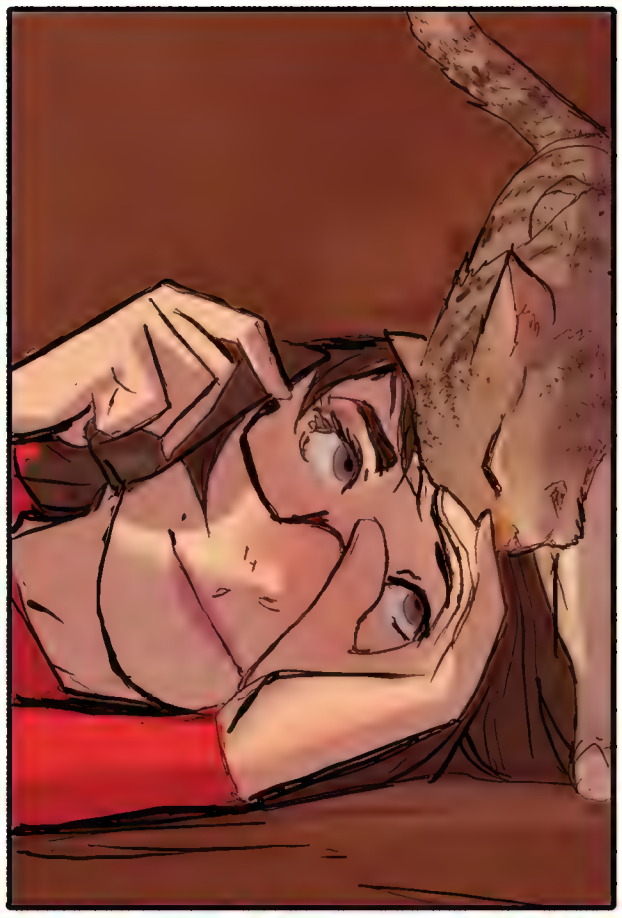

AND SHE KINDA WANTED TO MEET HER....
I HATE THE UNIVERSE!
WAZZUP, POOKIE?
AUNT FLO IS BACK!
AWWW...I GUESS YOU HAD SOME... PLANS?
SOOO MANY PLANS...GOOD PLANS, BRILLIANT PLANS.
UGH...SO, YOU SYNCHING UP WITH ME OR WHAT?
YEAH...THAT'S HOW THAT WORKS. ON COMMAND!
SIGH...GAY GUYS DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS SHIT!
OOOOKAAAYYY... SO YOU ARE JUST GONNA DROP THAT LINE LIKE IT'S NO BIG DEAL?
AHEM...
SOOO...UM.
YEAAAHH...
I...GOTTA GO DO A SHIFT AT THE DINER NOW AND AFTER THAT I'M MEETING ANNE AND CASSIE FOR LUNCH TO FIGURE OUT HER NEXT TATTOO SESSION... YOU...WANNA JOIN US? MEET ANNE?

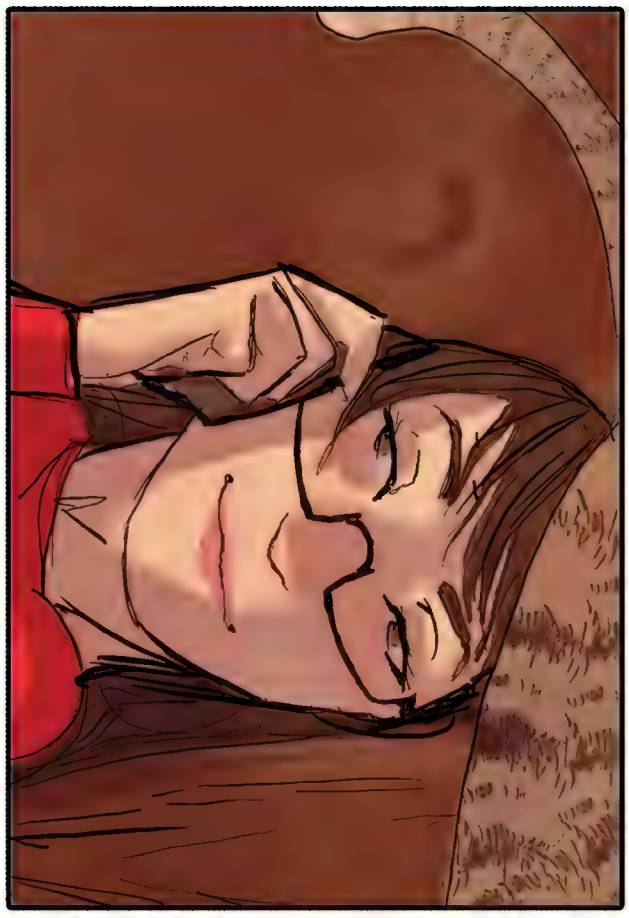
NAH, RAINCHECK... I'M IN NO MOOD FOR SMALLTALK. PROBABLY JUST GONNA GO KILL SOME STUFF -- NEW EXPANSION TODAY... SO AT LEAST SOME GOOD NEWS.

OH, THAT'S THAT GAME YOU PLAY?
YEAH...JUST THE THING FOR MY CURRENT MURDEROUS MOOD.


WELL, I MUST GO. HANG IN THERE, OKAY?

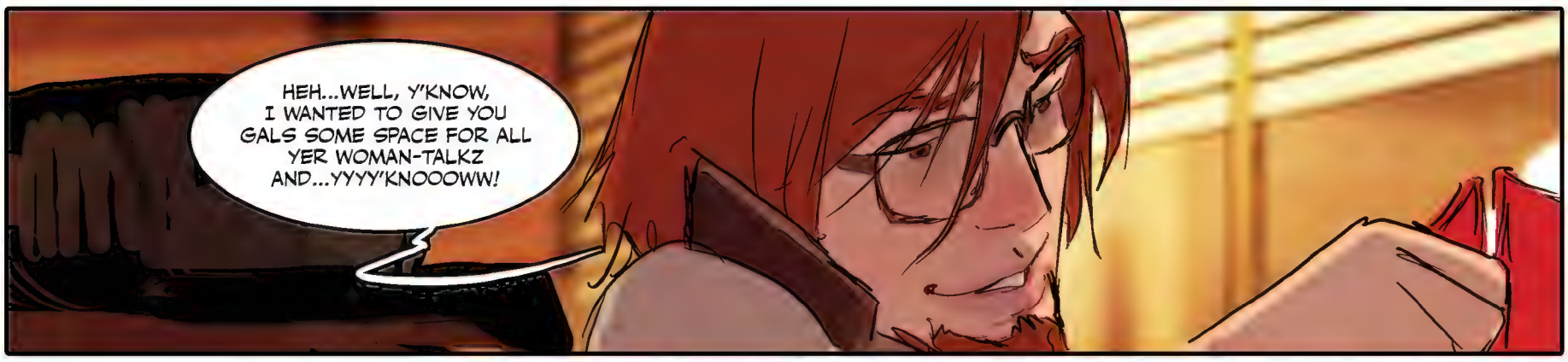

WANT ME TO BRING BACK SOMETHING TO EAT?
SURPRISE ME!
SIGH...PIZZA IT IS.
THEEERE YOU GO!





WHAT?

CHICKEN-BUTT! I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM YOU FOR DAYS, DUMBASS! JUST CHECKING TO SEE IF YOU ARE ALIVE!


HEH...WELL, Y'KNOW, I WANTED TO GIVE YOU GALS SOME SPACE FOR ALL YER WOMAN-TALKZ AND...YYYY'KNOOOWW!

YEAH...NO *Y'KNOWS* FOR A FEW DAYS...NATURE IS BEING A DICK!

EW!
MY EYES ARE UP HERE

SO...YOU WANNA DROP BY MAYBE?
NAH, DEADLINE AHEAD! GOTTA FINISH SOME COSTUMES FOR AN EVENT. YOU TWO WANNA COME? IT'S TONIGHT AT "CRIMSON."

NOPE! GOT MORE THAN ENOUGH CRIMSON HERE!

AGAIN...EW!
SCREW YOU, ALAN!
LOVE YOU TOO, ALLY!
MY EYES ARE UP HERE

SIGH...
ALL WORK, NO PLAY MAKE ALLY...TALK TO HERSELF...IN THIRD PERSON...
THAAAT'S HEALTHY!
AH, WELL... FUCK IT! GAME TIME!
GOOD OLD ESCAPISM. THERE FOR US IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD...

I WOULD KNOW...AFTER ALL, ESCAPISM WAS MY BREAD AND BUTTER.

LISBETH!

YES, MISTRESS?

AT LEAST TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE ARE PRETTY MUCH GUARANTEED TO HAVE CRAZY IDEAS: WRITERS, AND HORNY PEOPLE. WHAT I MEAN IS, BOTH ARE KNOWN TO SAY: "HEY, THIS SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME!"

I, MY DEAR READER, WAS BOTH. MY HEAD WAS FULL OF CRAZY IDEAS. AND I GLADLY PUT THEM INTO WRITING. NOW, OF THE MANY ADULT STORIES I WROTE BACK THEN, THE MOST POPULAR WERE THE ***ALLISON AND LISBETH*** SERIES...

IN A WAY, THEY STARTED AS MY LITTLE FLIRTATIONS WITH ALLY -- BACK WHEN WE WERE JUST "INTERNET FRIENDS." THESE STORIES WERE BOTH SEXUAL FANTASIES, AND CREATIVE VENTS.

SO...OKAY...WHY AM I EVEN MENTIONING THIS?

WELL...THESE STORIES STARTED OFF AS SIMPLE AND BLATANT SELF-INSERTS OF ALLY AND I. HOWEVER, A WRITER'S MIND IS A RESTLESS BEAST. SO I DID WHAT ANY WRITER DOES. TO ESCALATE THINGS, I ADDED ANOTHER CHARACTER.

FUNNY THING IS...THREESOMES RANKED QUITE LOW ON MY LIST OF SEXUAL FANTASIES, BUT THEY SURE WERE FUN TO WRITE.

SO, IN THE END, I CREATED ***SARAH...***

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME.

I WANT YOU TO MEET SARAH, OUR NEW...PLAYMATE. I WANT YOU TO SHOW HER AROUND, AND HELP HER... PREPARE FOR TONIGHT.

PROPERTY OF ALLISON

IT MAY HAVE BEEN A CASE OF WRITER'S LAZINESS, TOO. TWO SUBS AND ONE DOMME PRESENTED A RICH SUPPLY OF SITUATIONS...STORIES KIND OF WROTE THEMSELVES.

STORIES OF ALLY AND LISBETH WERE QUITE POPULAR...BUT WHEN I INTRODUCED THE NEW CHARACTER, SARAH, POPULARITY SKYROCKETED.

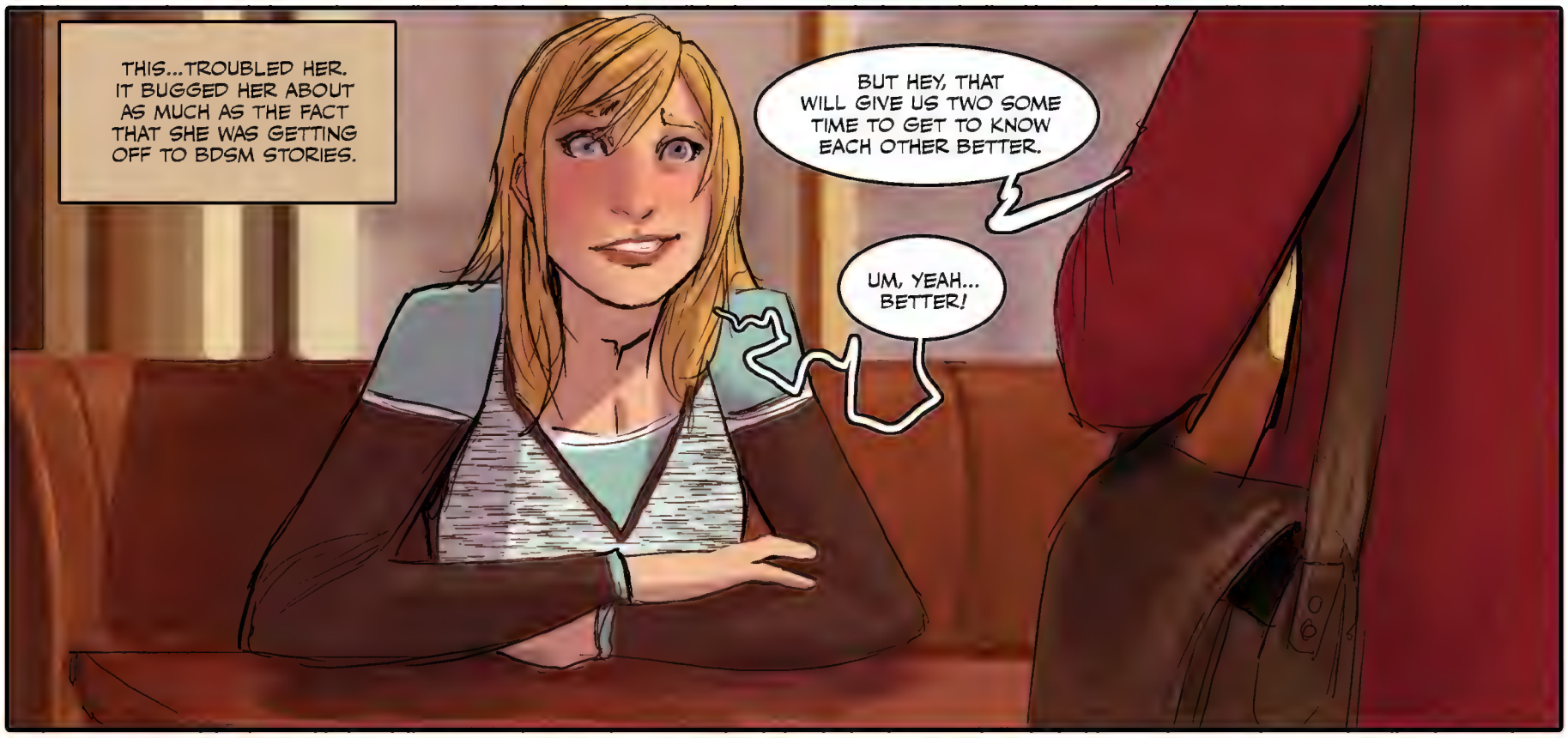
FOR SOME REASON, THE NEW, INEXPERIENCED SUB, RESONATED WITH MY AUDIENCE BACK THEN...

UM...HEY.

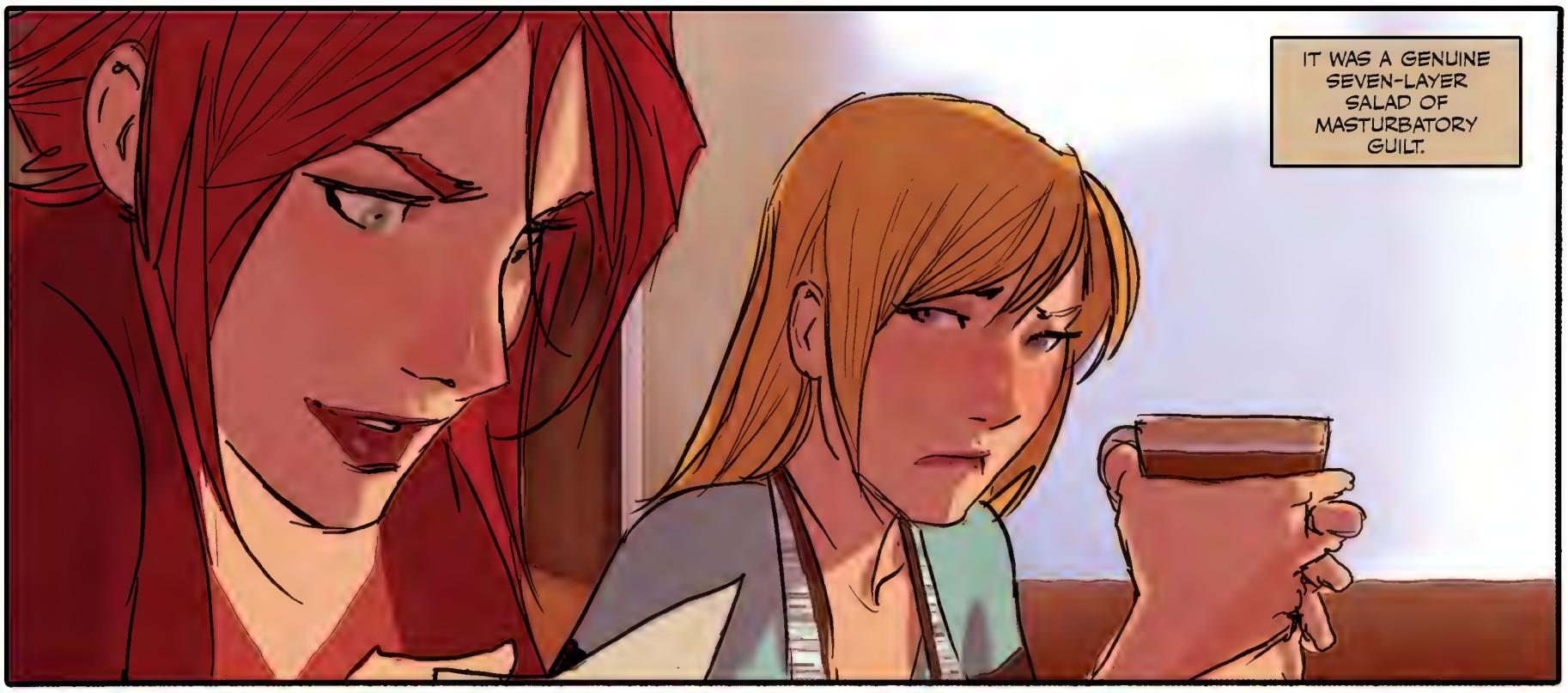
AND FOR REASONS OF HER OWN, ANNE STRONGLY RELATED TO SARAH...TO THE POINT THAT, IN HER FANTASIES, SHE ***WAS*** HER.

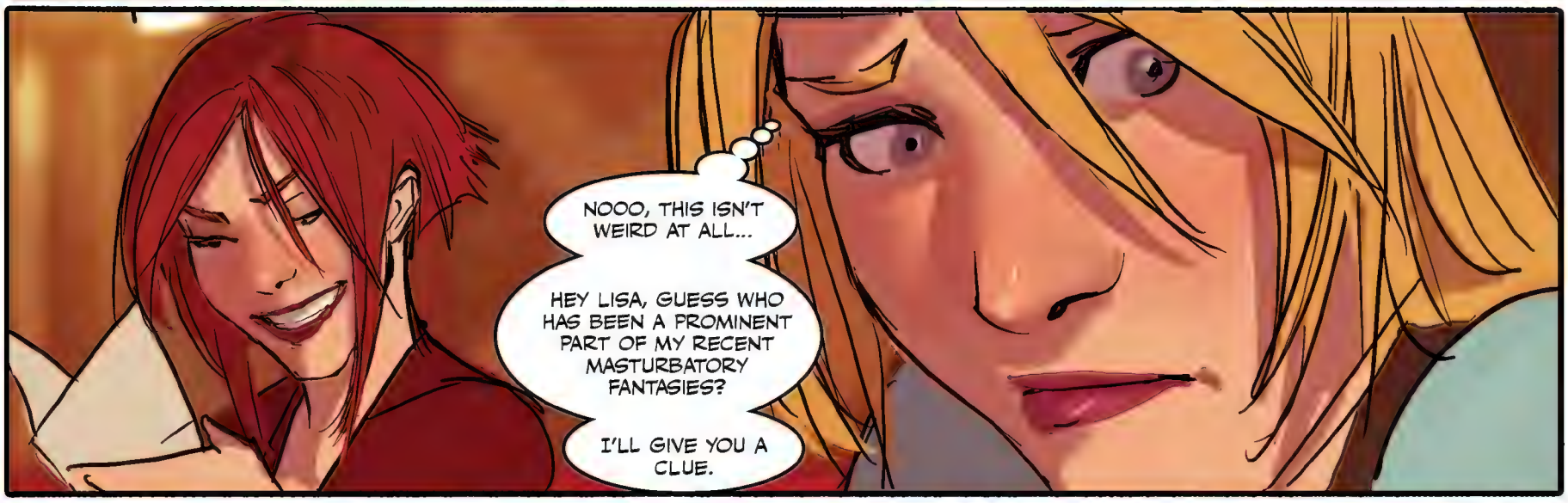
AND YES. IN HER MIND I WAS LISBETH.

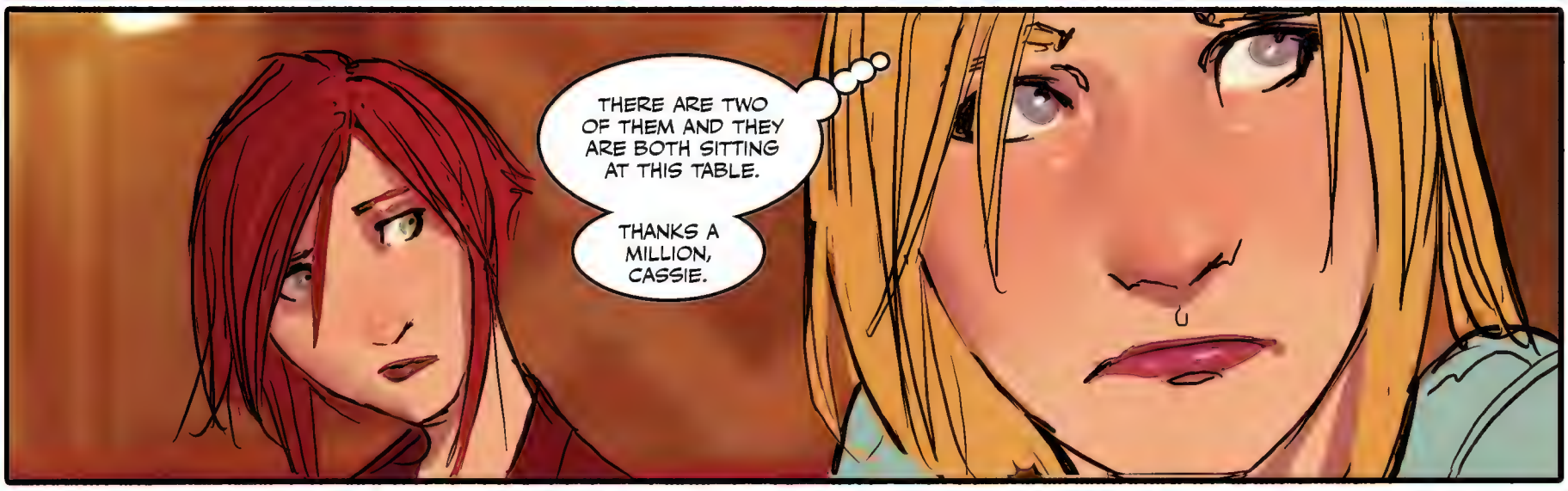
HEY, ANNE! CASSIE WILL BE A BIT LATE!


THIS...TROUBLED HER. IT BUGGED HER ABOUT AS MUCH AS THE FACT THAT SHE WAS GETTING OFF TO BDSM STORIES.
BUT HEY, THAT WILL GIVE US TWO SOME TIME TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER.
UM, YEAH... BETTER!

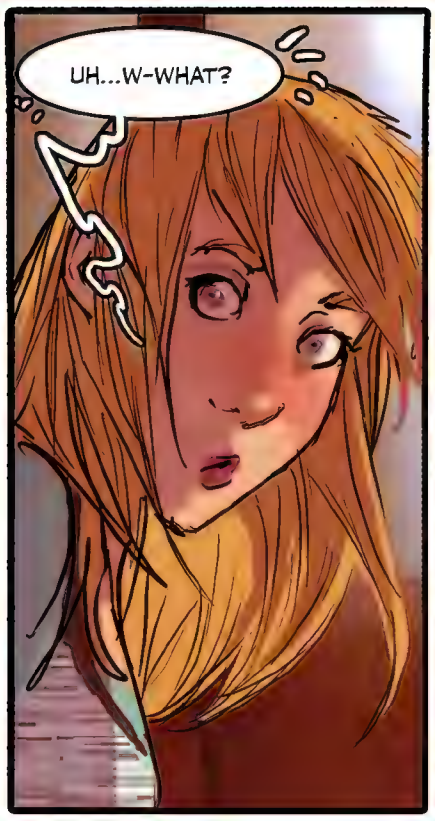
SCOOTCH OVER! I WANNA SHOW YOU SOMETHING!


IT WAS A GENUINE SEVEN-LAYER SALAD OF MASTURBATORY GUILT.


NOOO, THIS ISN'T WEIRD AT ALL...
HEY LISA, GUESS WHO HAS BEEN A PROMINENT PART OF MY RECENT MASTURBATORY FANTASIES?
I'LL GIVE YOU A CLUE.

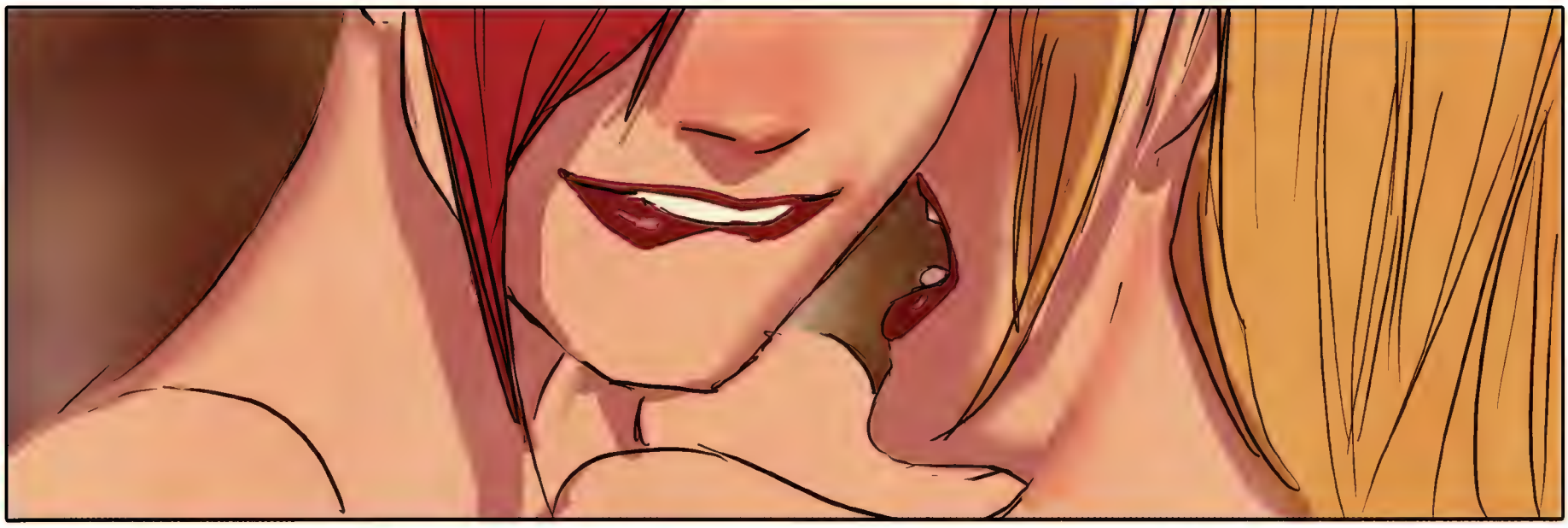

THERE ARE TWO OF THEM AND THEY ARE BOTH SITTING AT THIS TABLE.
THANKS A MILLION, CASSIE.

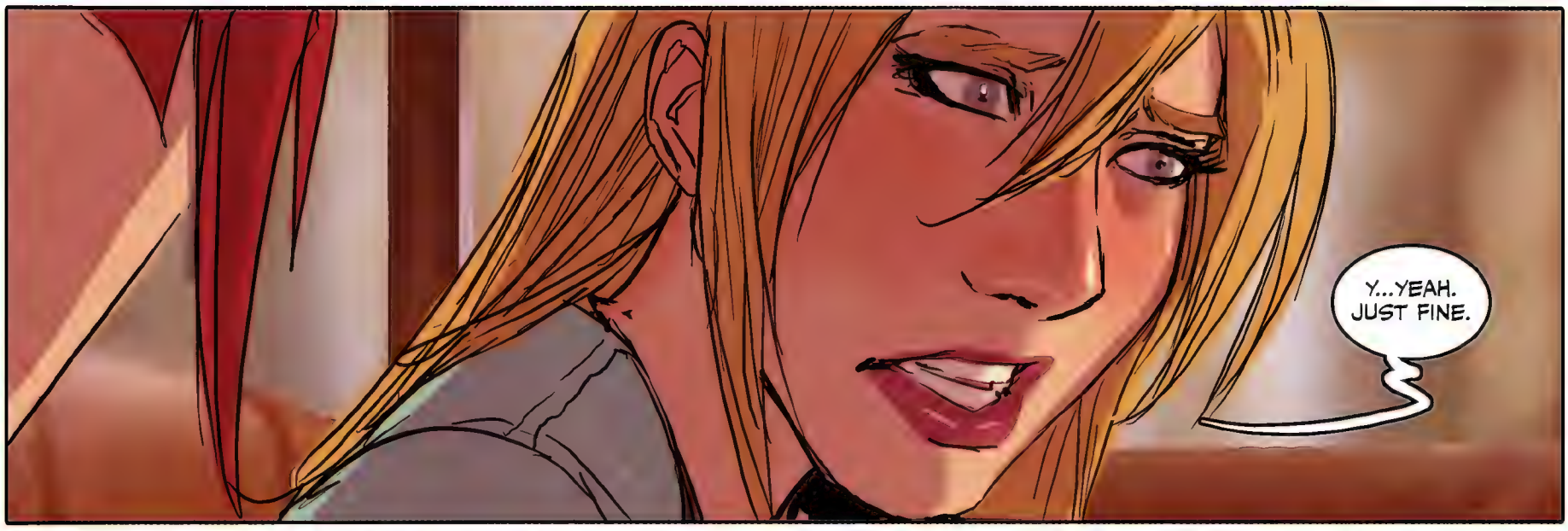
HEY, ANNE!

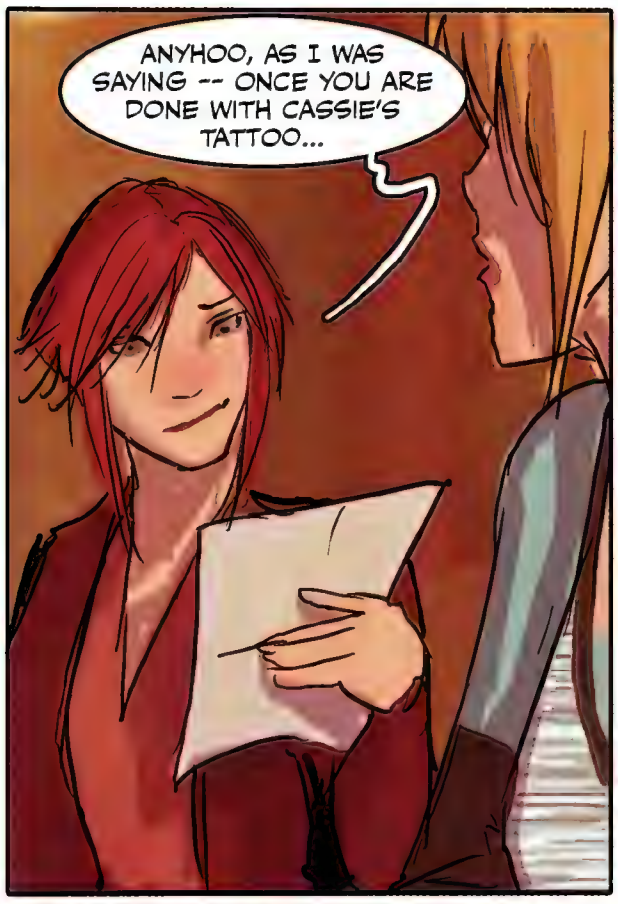

UH...W-WHAT?

YOU...KINDA DRIFTED OFF THERE.

YOU OKAY?

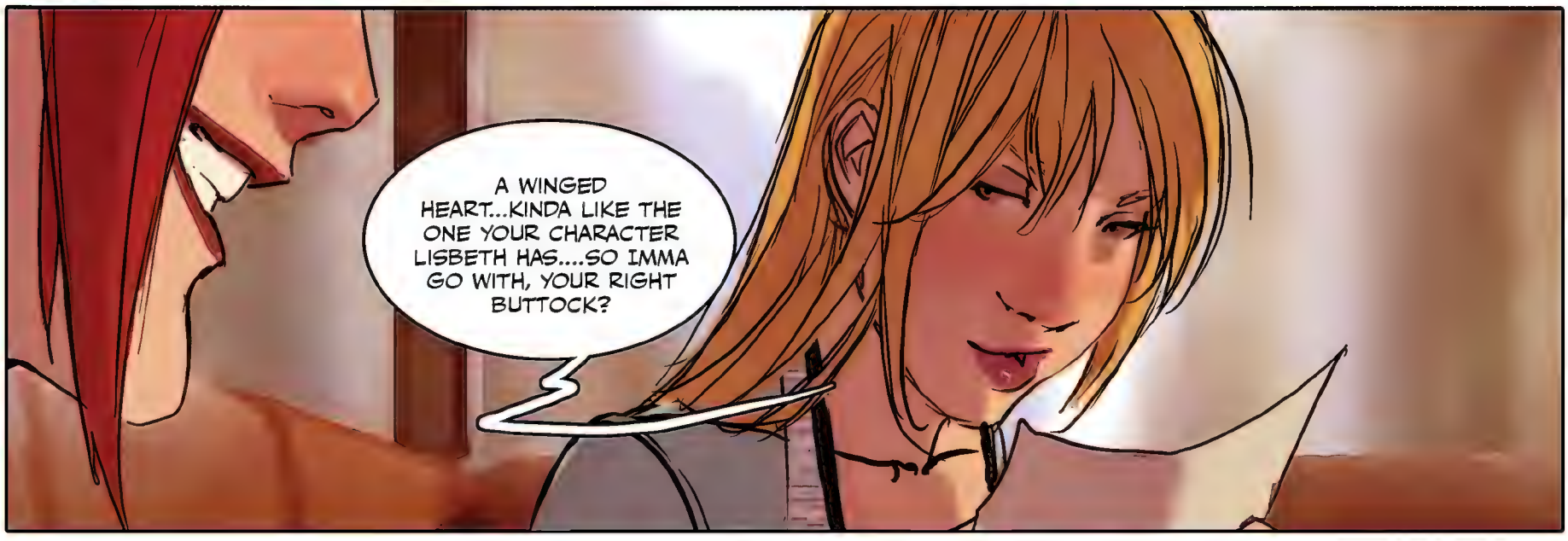


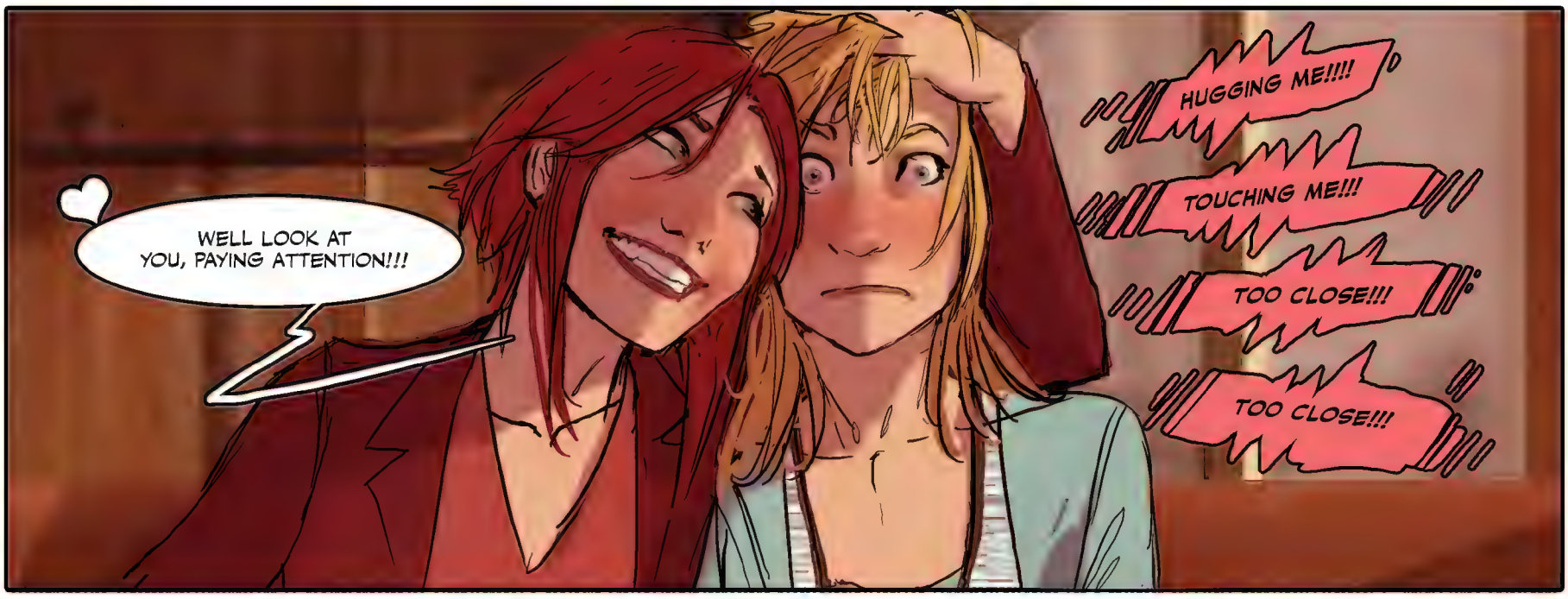

Y...YEAH. JUST FINE.

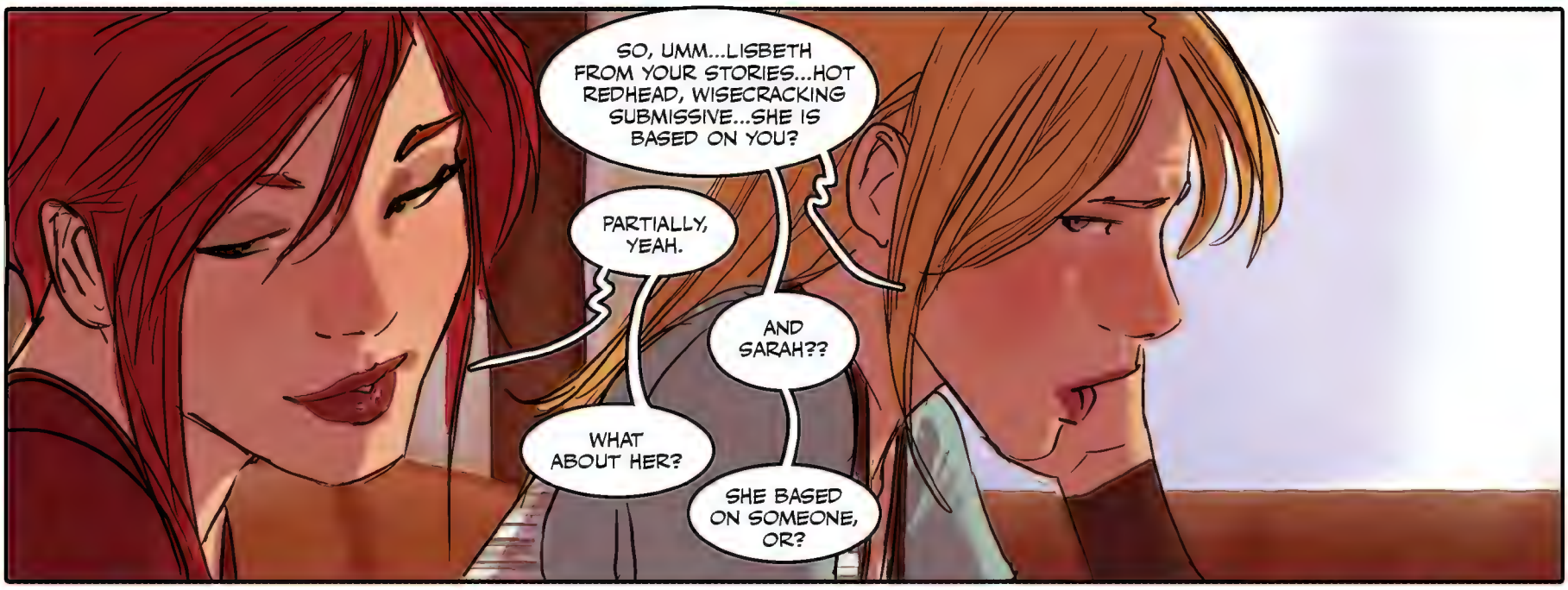

ANYHOO, AS I WAS SAYING -- ONCE YOU ARE DONE WITH CASSIE'S TATTOO...

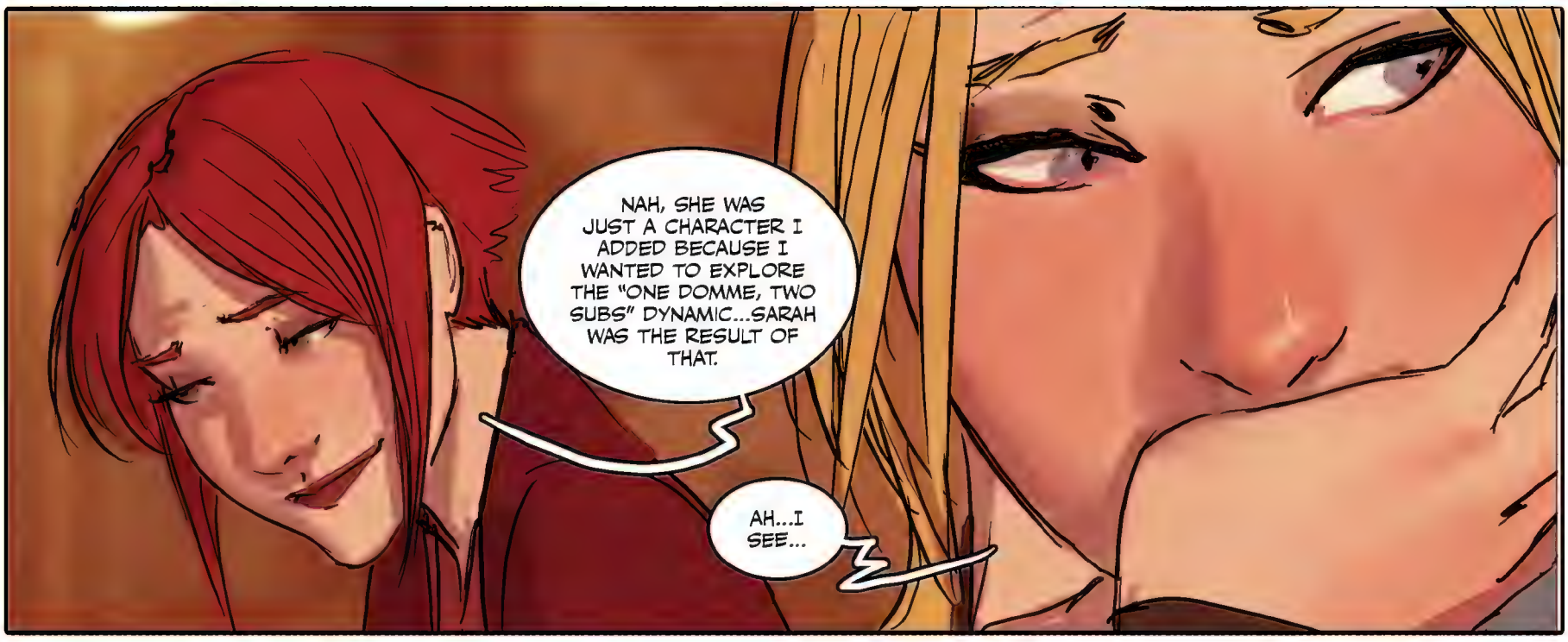
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO THIS ONE ON ME!

CAN YOU GUESS WHERE?

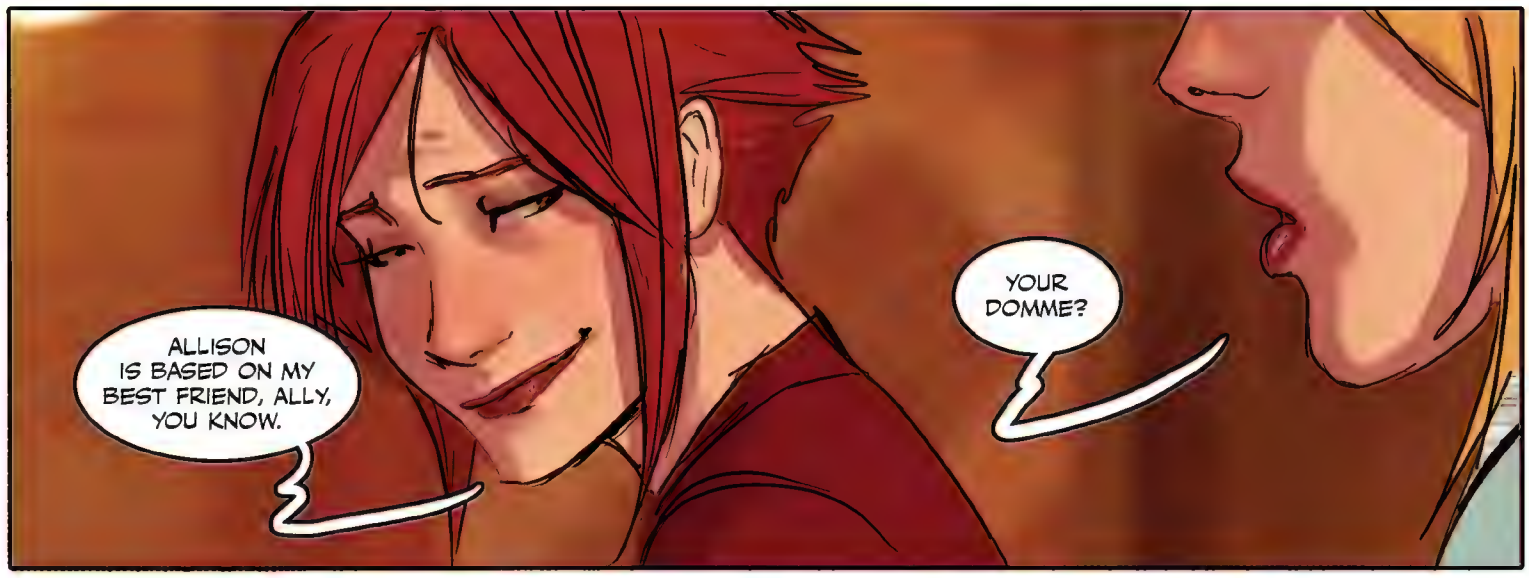

A WINGED HEART...KINDA LIKE THE ONE YOUR CHARACTER LISBETH HAS....SO IMMA GO WITH, YOUR RIGHT BUTTOCK?

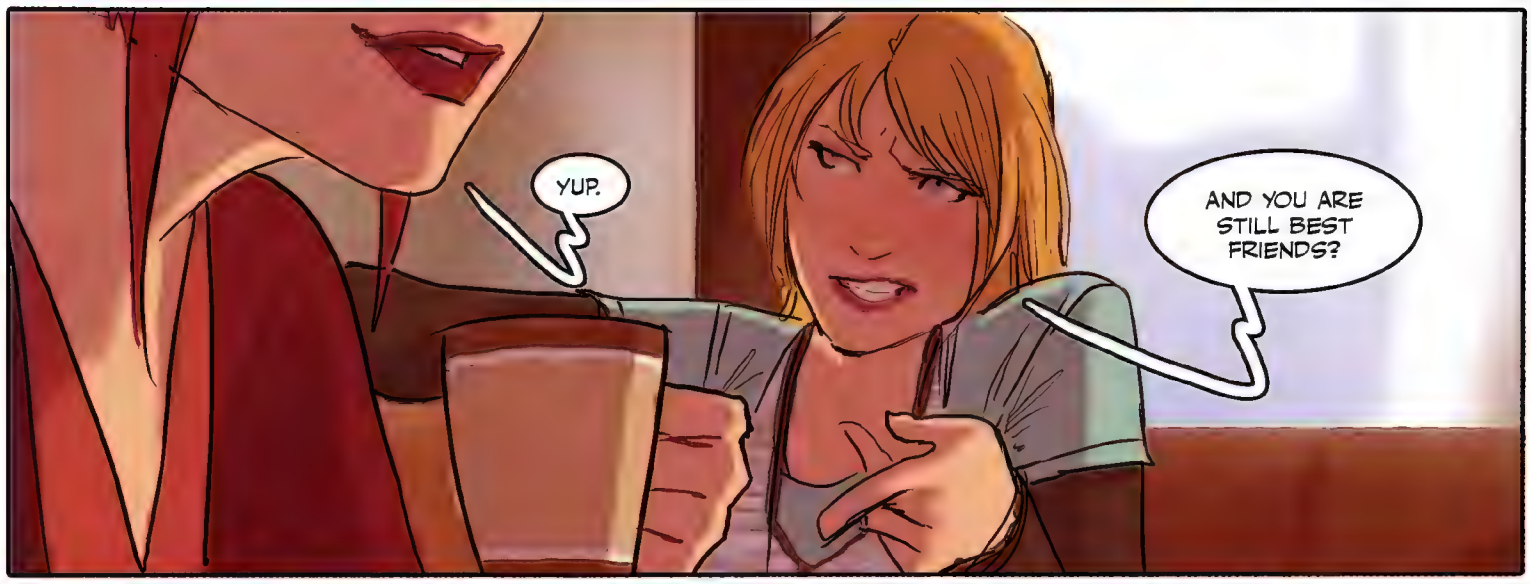

WELL LOOK AT YOU, PAYING ATTENTION!!!
HUGGING ME!!!!
TOUCHING ME!!!
TOO CLOSE!!!
TOO CLOSE!!!

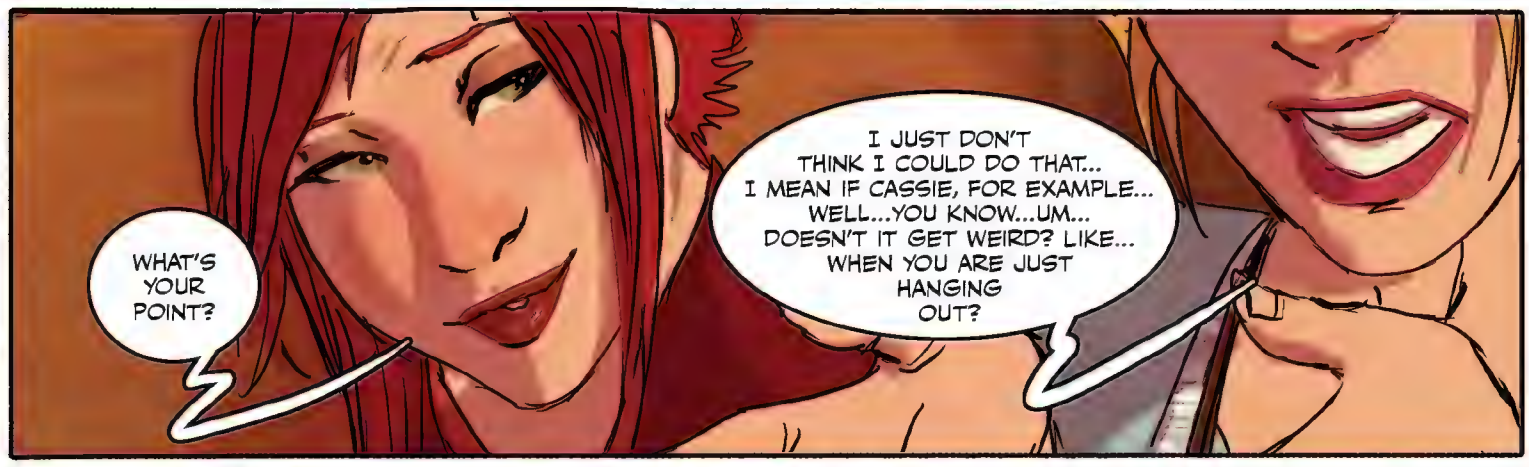

SO, UMM...LISBETH FROM YOUR STORIES...HOT REDHEAD, WISECRACKING SUBMISSIVE...SHE IS BASED ON YOU?
PARTIALLY, YEAH.
AND SARAH??
WHAT ABOUT HER?
SHE BASED ON SOMEONE, OR?

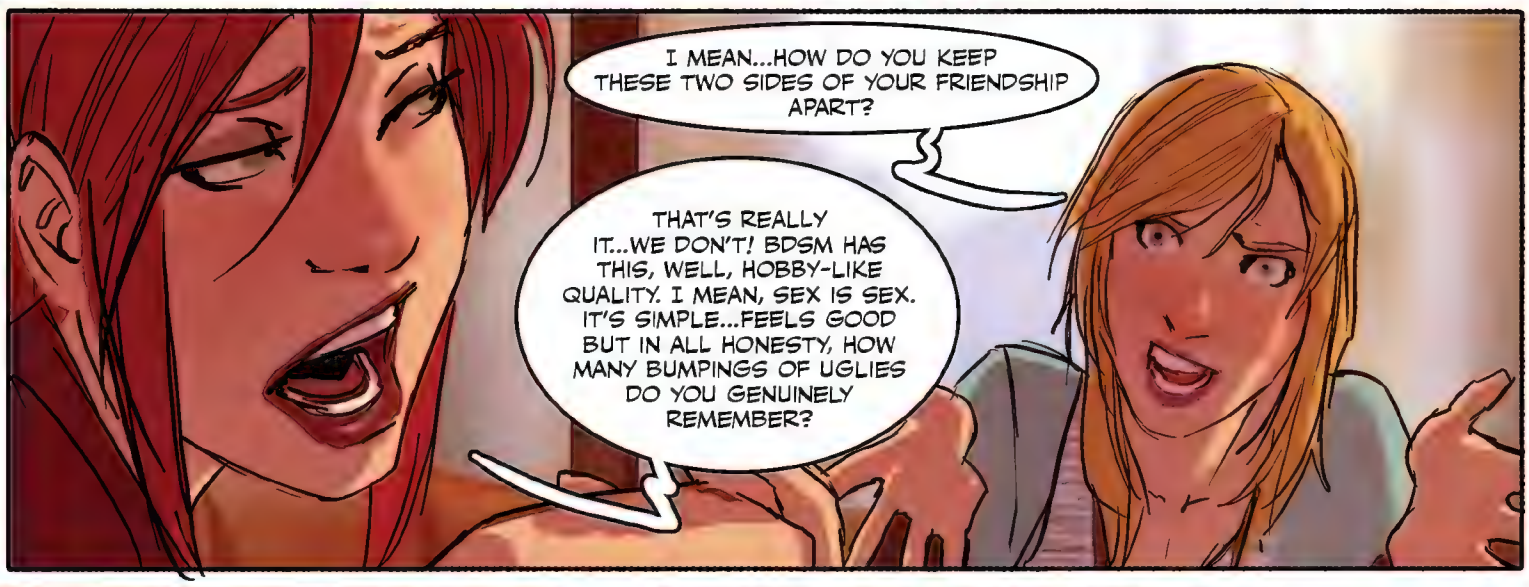

NAH, SHE WAS JUST A CHARACTER I ADDED BECAUSE I WANTED TO EXPLORE THE "ONE DOMME, TWO SUBS" DYNAMIC...SARAH WAS THE RESULT OF THAT.
AH...I SEE...

IT'S JUST, I'VE READ YOUR STORIES A FEW TIMES NOW, AND OF ALL OF THEM, THOSE FEATURING ALLISON, LISBETH, AND SARAH SOMEHOW FELT MORE...I DUNNO, REAL.

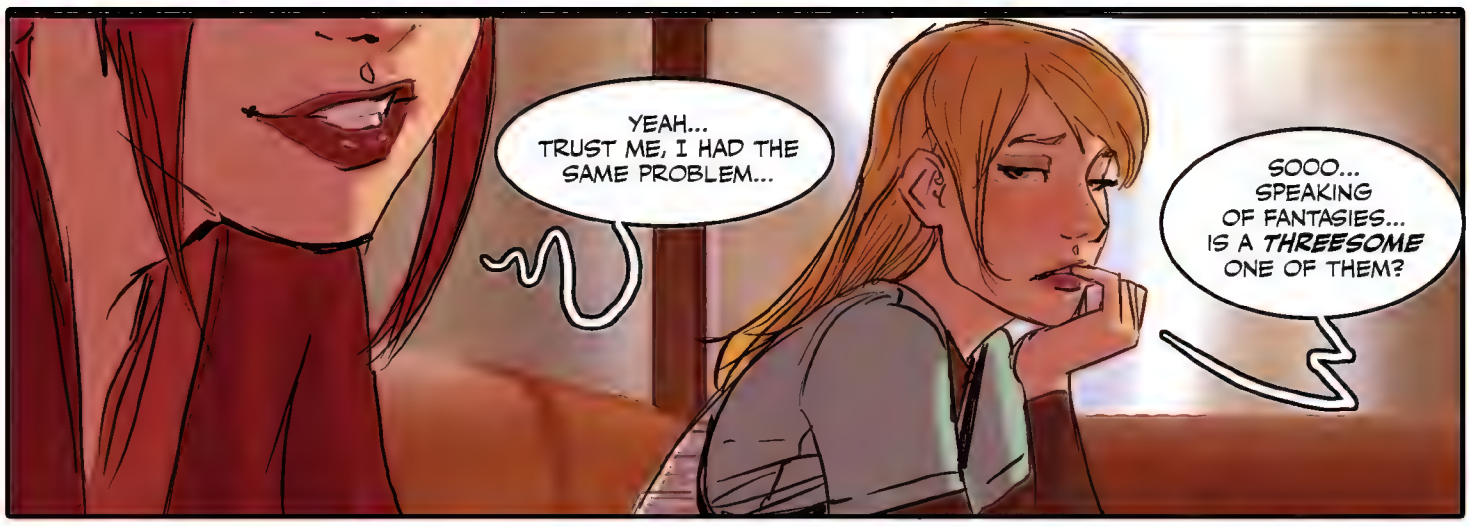

ALLISON IS BASED ON MY BEST FRIEND, ALLY, YOU KNOW.
YOUR DOMME?


YUP.
AND YOU ARE STILL BEST FRIENDS?


WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
I JUST DON'T THINK I COULD DO THAT... I MEAN IF CASSIE, FOR EXAMPLE... WELL...YOU KNOW...UM... DOESN'T IT GET WEIRD? LIKE... WHEN YOU ARE JUST HANGING OUT?


I MEAN...HOW DO YOU KEEP THESE TWO SIDES OF YOUR FRIENDSHIP APART?
THAT'S REALLY IT...WE DON'T! BDSM HAS THIS, WELL, HOBBY-LIKE QUALITY. I MEAN, SEX IS SEX. IT'S SIMPLE...FEELS GOOD BUT IN ALL HONESTY, HOW MANY BUMPINGS OF UGLIES DO YOU GENUINELY REMEMBER?

THIS...IS MUCH MORE LAYERED. MEMORIES ALONE ARE MORE THAN WORTH IT. THERE IS DISCUSSING RIGS, SCENARIOS, FANTASIES, WHAT MIGHT WORK AND WHAT WOULDN'T...IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, IT'S MORE THAN SEX, IT'S A COMMON INTEREST.
SIGH...SO THE TWO OF YOU BASICALLY KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER THAN MY EX-BOYFRIEND AND I KNEW EACH OTHER. AIN'T THAT JUST A LITTLE BIT DEPRESSING...


YEAH... TRUST ME, I HAD THE SAME PROBLEM...
SOOO... SPEAKING OF FANTASIES... IS A *THREESOME* ONE OF THEM?

W...WHAT?
WELL...I MEAN, IF YOUR WRITING IS ANY INDICATION...
MY WRITING IS A MERE FANTASY.
BASED ON SOME REALITY...
UM...WHAT ARE YOU DRIVING AT?
JUST TRYING TO FIGURE YOU OUT.

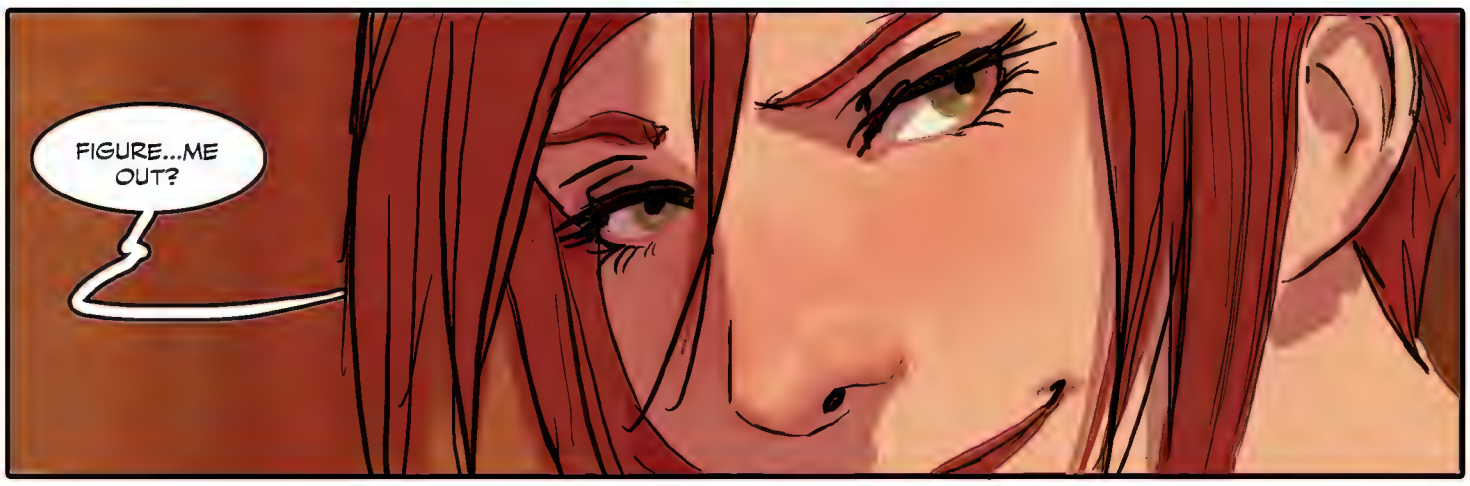
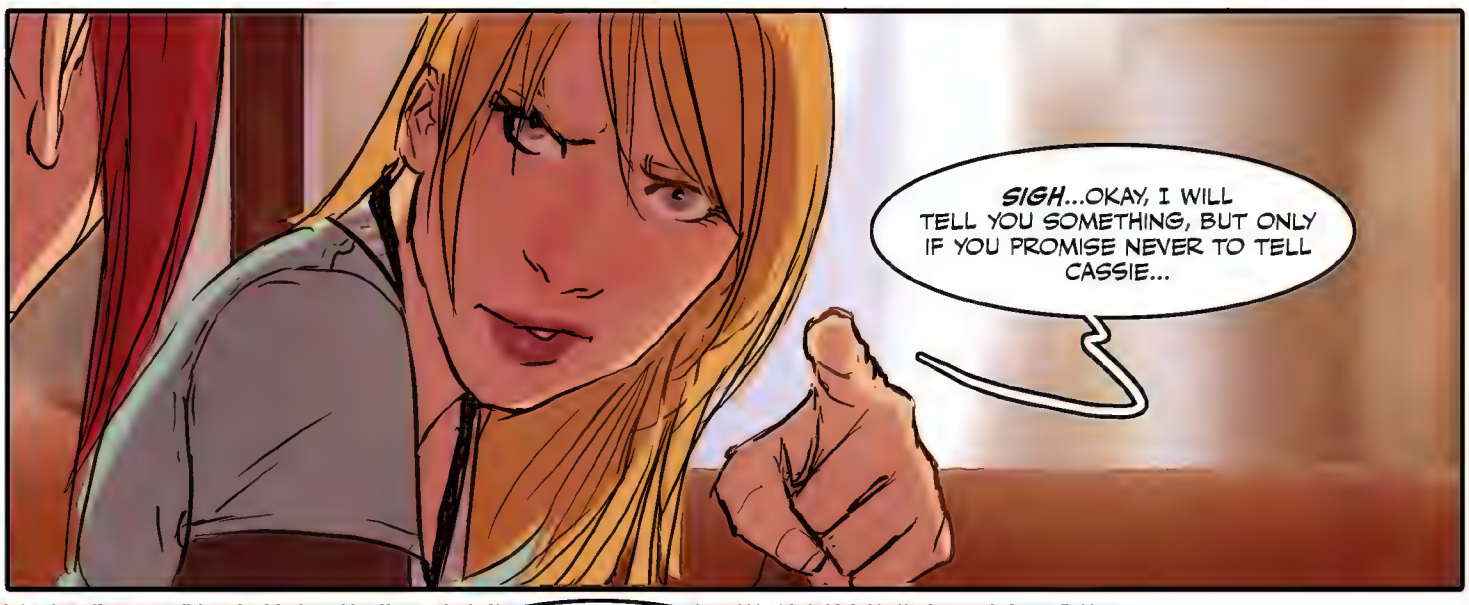
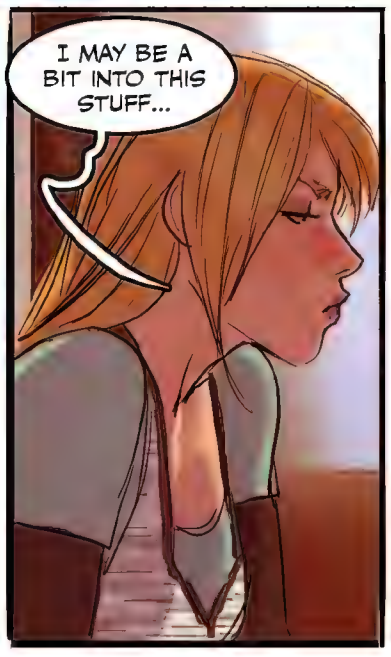


FIGURE...ME OUT?

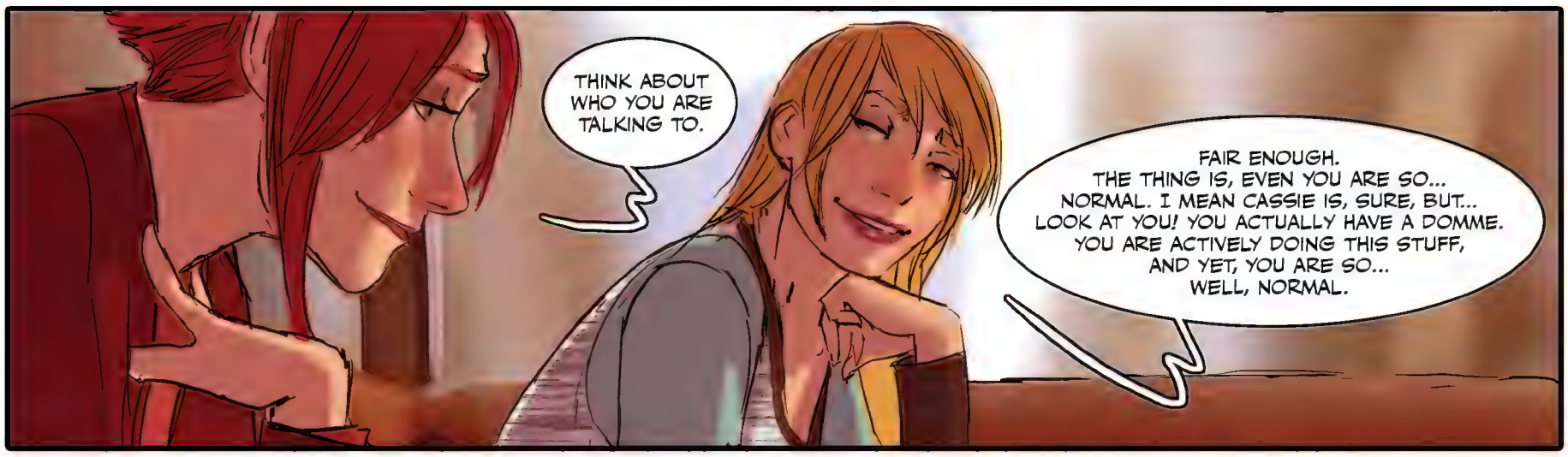

SIGH...OKAY, I WILL TELL YOU SOMETHING, BUT ONLY IF YOU PROMISE NEVER TO TELL CASSIE...

SURE.

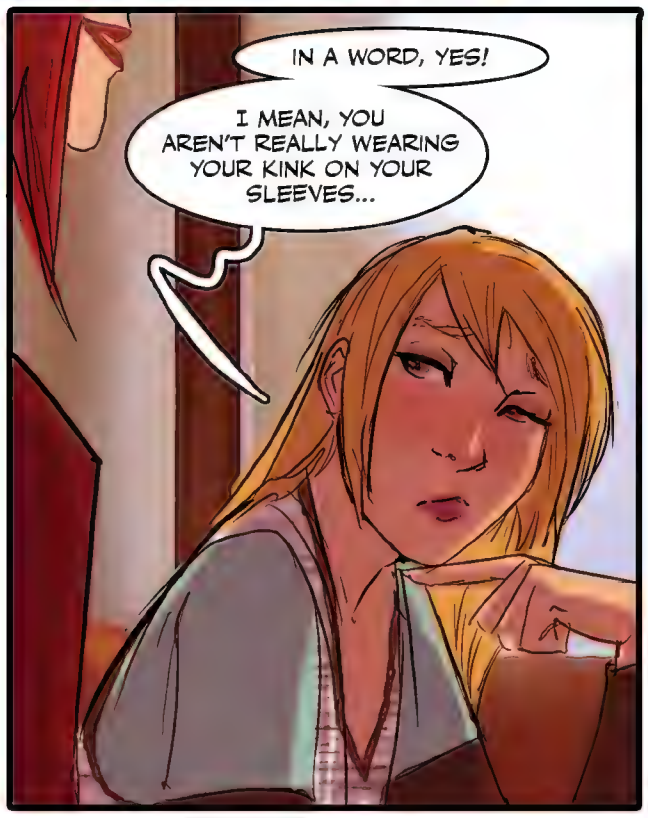

I MAY BE A BIT INTO THIS STUFF...

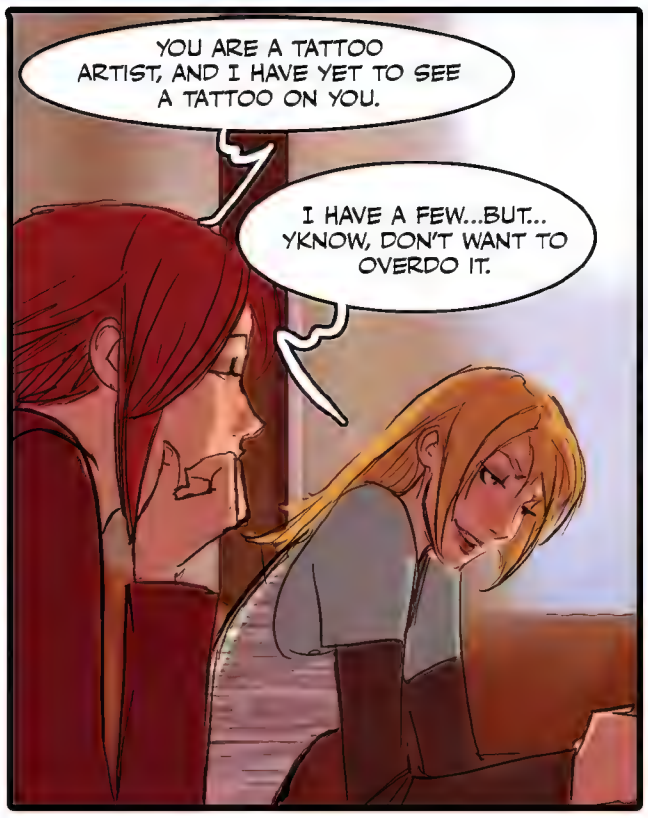
SO WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH FIGURING ME OUT?

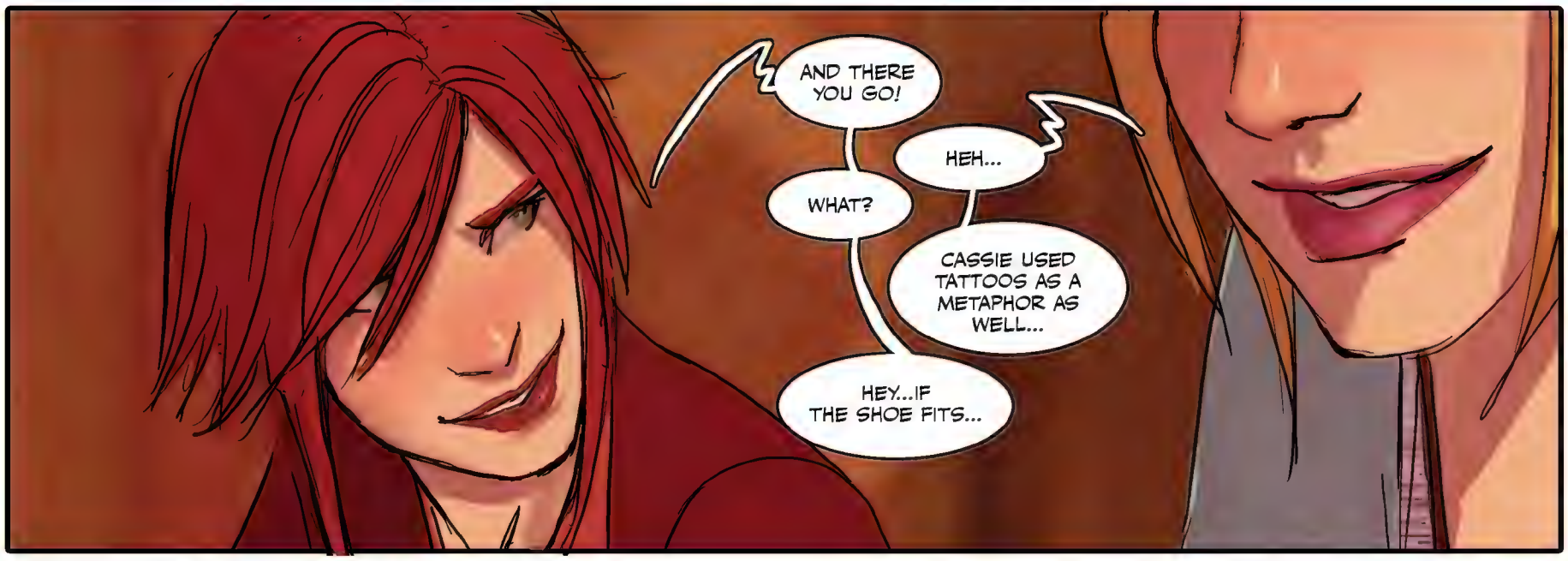
NOTHING...IT'S STUPID.


THINK ABOUT WHO YOU ARE TALKING TO.
FAIR ENOUGH. THE THING IS, EVEN YOU ARE SO... NORMAL. I MEAN CASSIE IS, SURE, BUT... LOOK AT YOU! YOU ACTUALLY HAVE A DOMME. YOU ARE ACTIVELY DOING THIS STUFF, AND YET, YOU ARE SO... WELL, NORMAL.

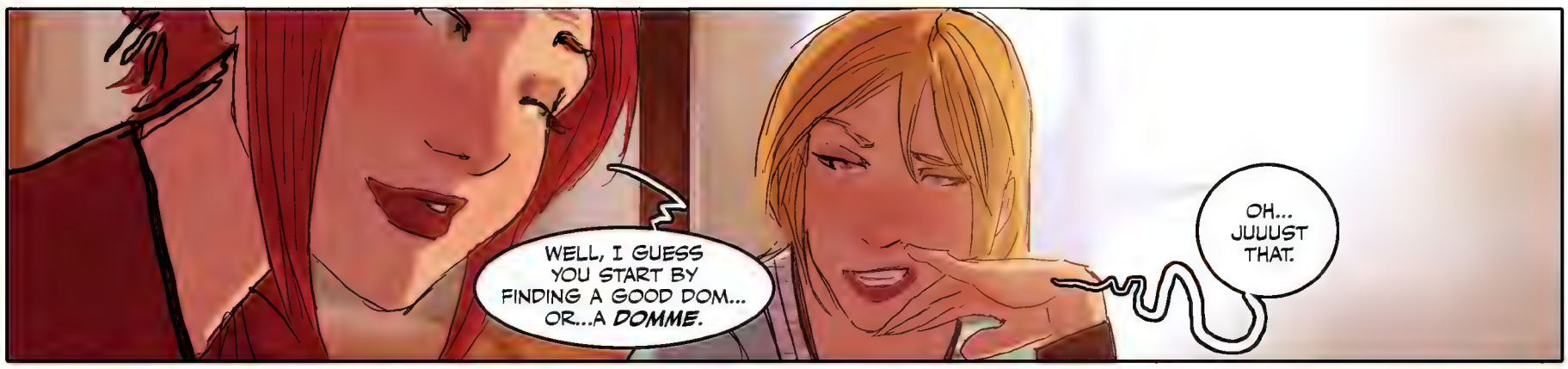
I FAIL TO LIVE UP TO YOUR PERVERT STEREOTYPE?

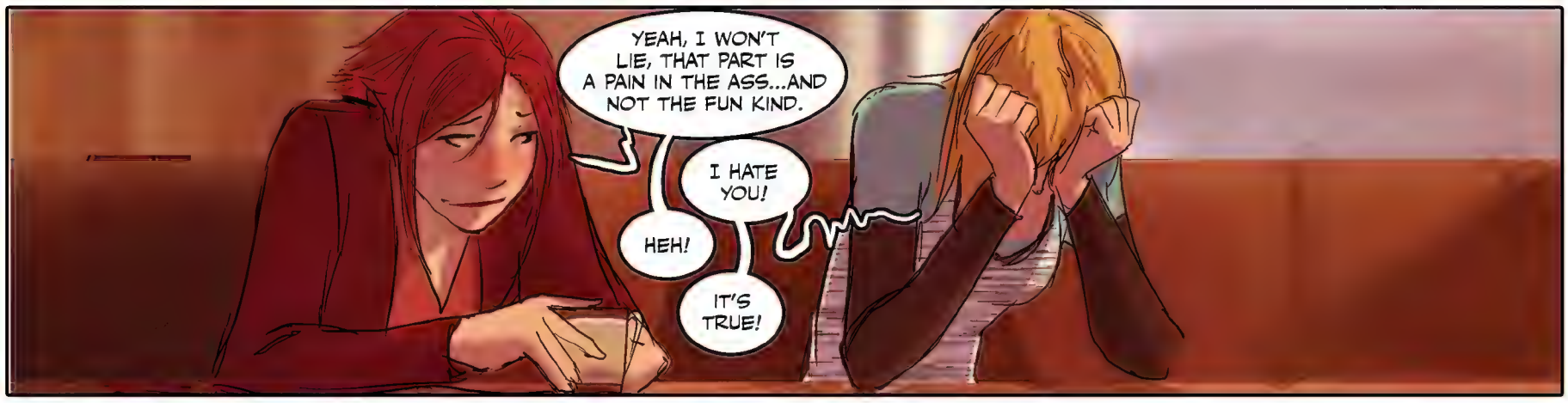

IN A WORD, YES!
I MEAN, YOU AREN'T REALLY WEARING YOUR KINK ON YOUR SLEEVES...

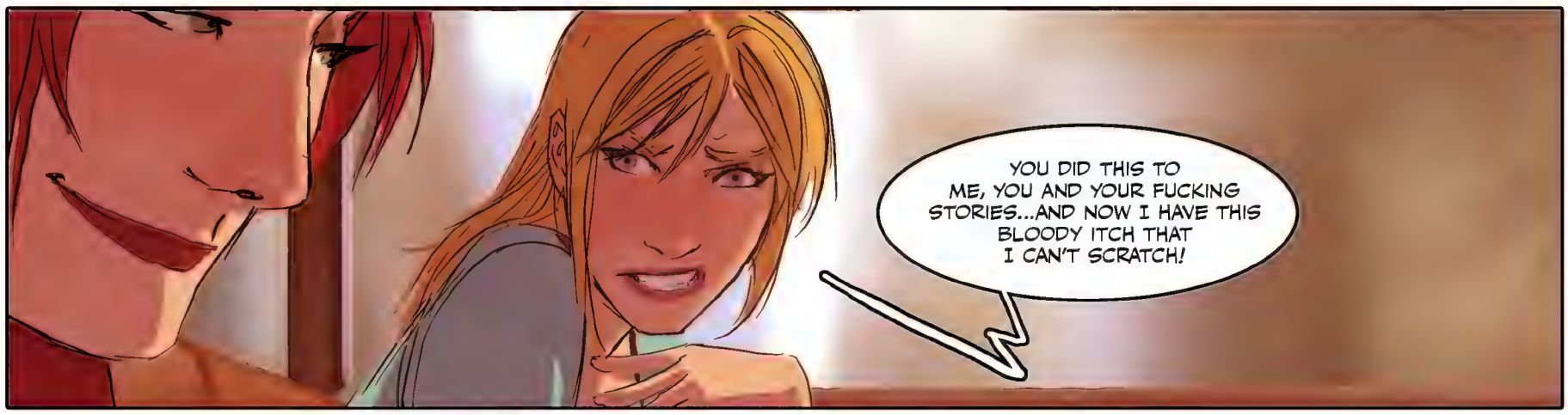

YOU ARE A TATTOO ARTIST, AND I HAVE YET TO SEE A TATTOO ON YOU.
I HAVE A FEW...BUT... YKNOW, DON'T WANT TO OVERDO IT.


AND THERE YOU GO!
HEH...
WHAT?
CASSIE USED TATTOOS AS A METAPHOR AS WELL...
HEY...IF THE SHOE FITS...

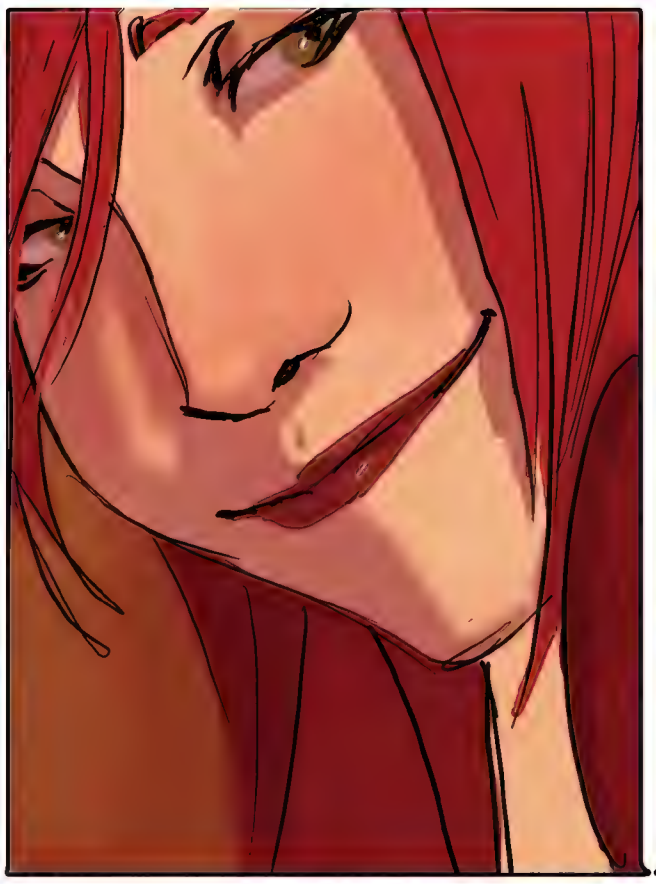
I GUESS MY PROBLEM IS...WELL...IT WAS ALL SO SUDDEN. AND NOW... HELL, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE, OR EVEN HOW TO START!

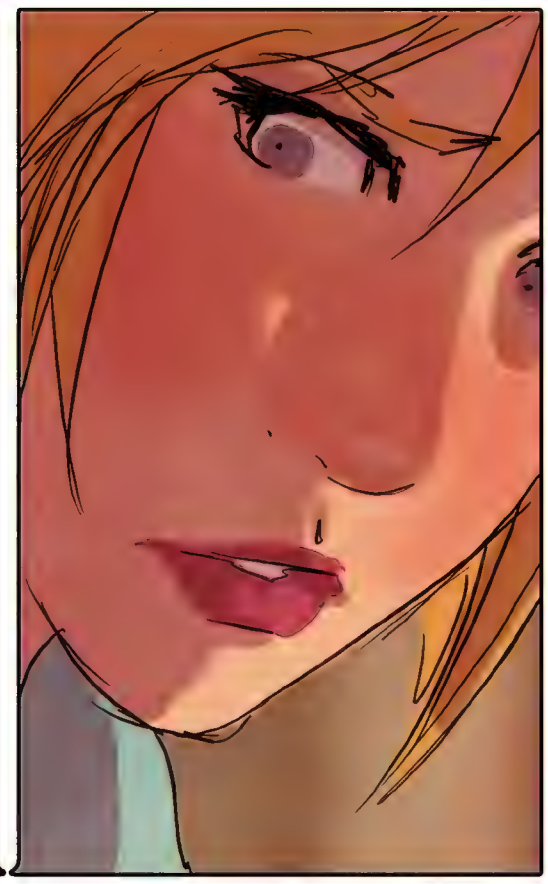

WELL, I GUESS YOU START BY FINDING A GOOD DOM... OR...A DOMME.
OH... JUUUST THAT.

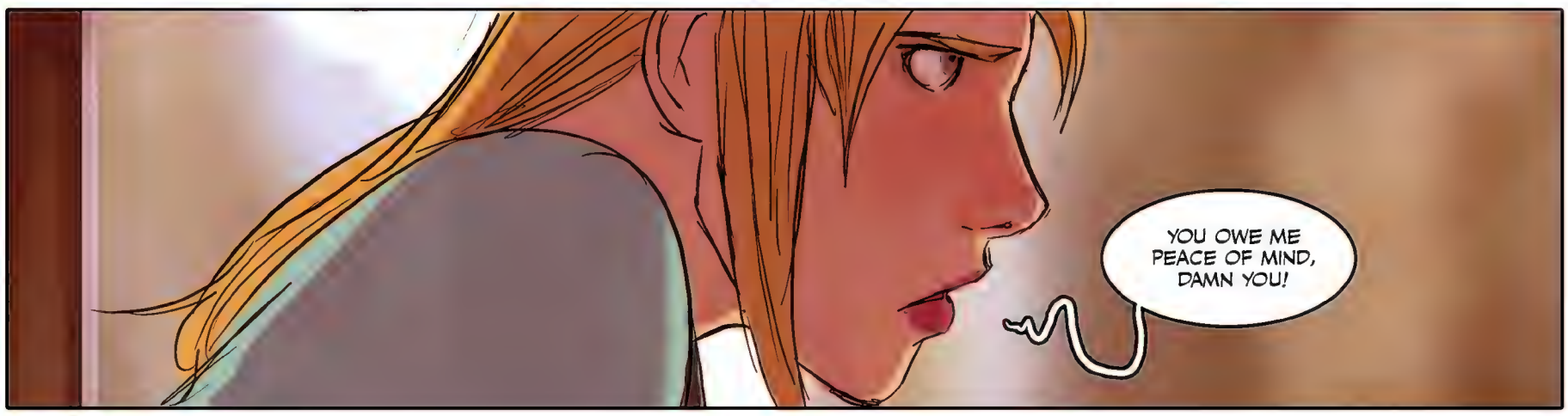

YEAH, I WON'T LIE, THAT PART IS A PAIN IN THE ASS...AND NOT THE FUN KIND.
I HATE YOU!
HEH!
IT'S TRUE!


YOU DID THIS TO ME, YOU AND YOUR FUCKING STORIES...AND NOW I HAVE THIS BLOODY ITCH THAT I CAN'T SCRATCH!

YOU...AND YOUR DAMN STORIES.






YOU OWE ME PEACE OF MIND, DAMN YOU!

YOU GOT A MOUTH ON YOU MISSIE! I MIGHT JUST ASK ALLY TO TEACH YOU A LESSON ABOUT NOT SWEARING IN PUBLIC!

THAT WAS A JOKE.

A *POORLY TIMED JOKE.*

HEY, CASSIE!

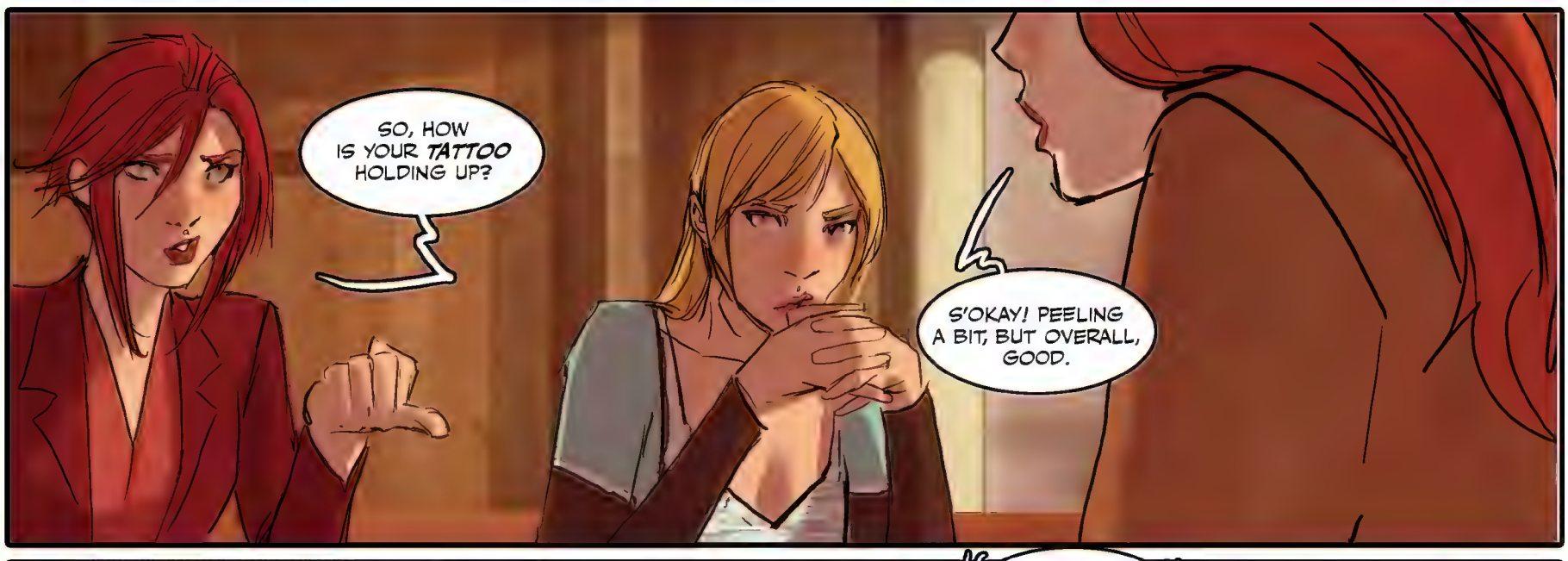
DON'T YOU "HEY CASSIE" ME, YOU LITTLE MINX. LOOK AT YOU, HITTING ON POOR ANNE; I MIGHT JUST HAVE TO TELL YOUR GIRLFRIEND ABOUT THIS!

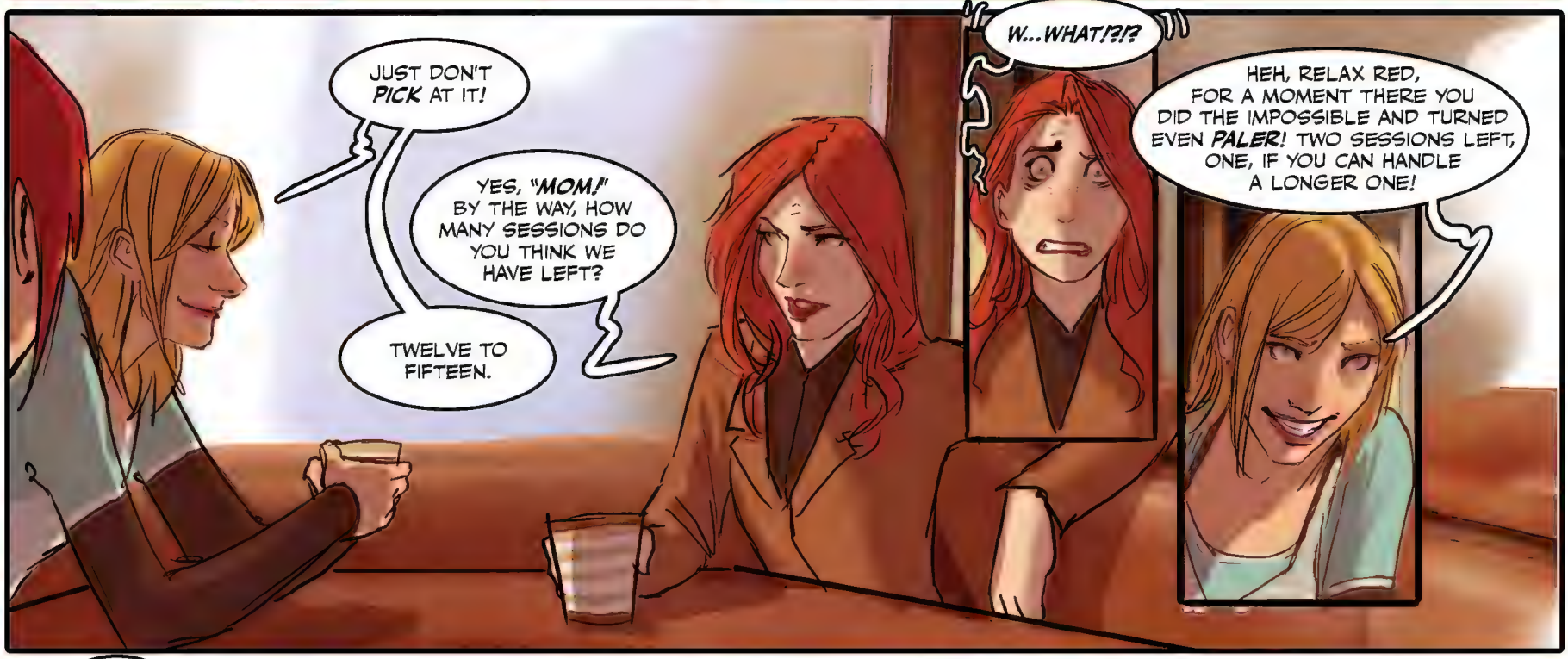
FRIEND!

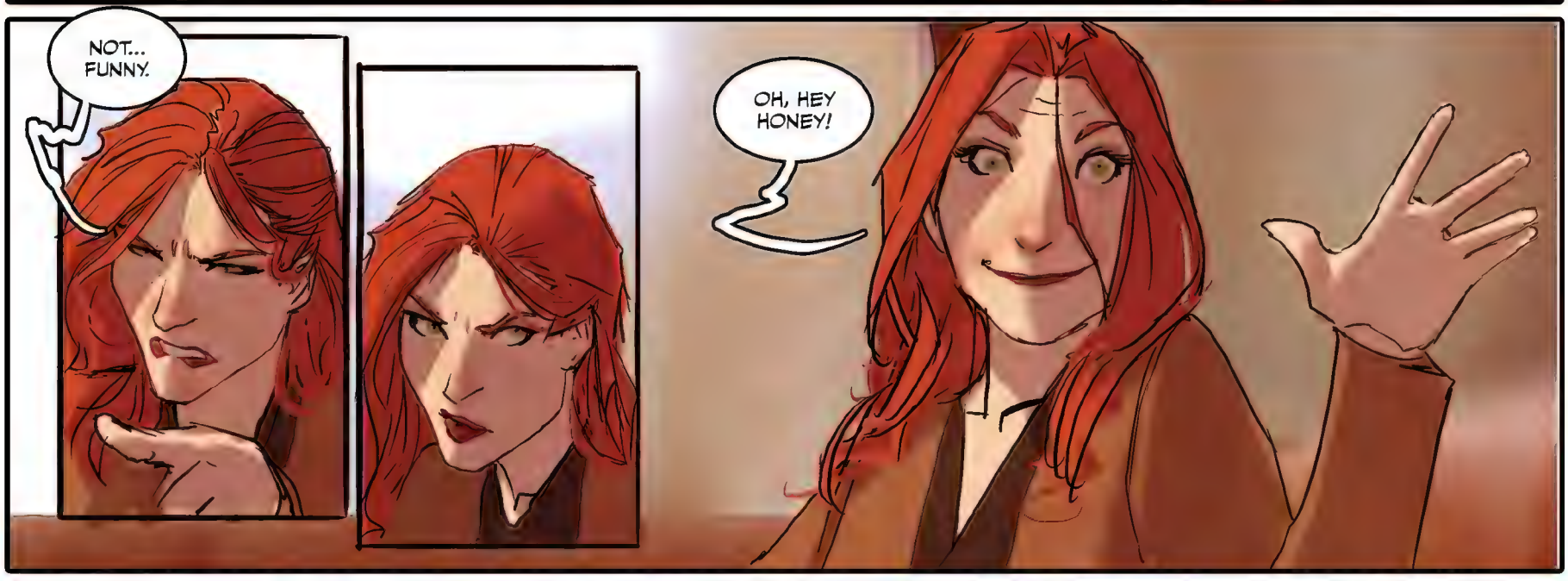
SURE, SURE.

SO, WHERE IS YOUR "FRIEND" NOW?

HOME.


SO, HOW IS YOUR TATTOO HOLDING UP?
S'OKAY! PEELING A BIT, BUT OVERALL, GOOD.

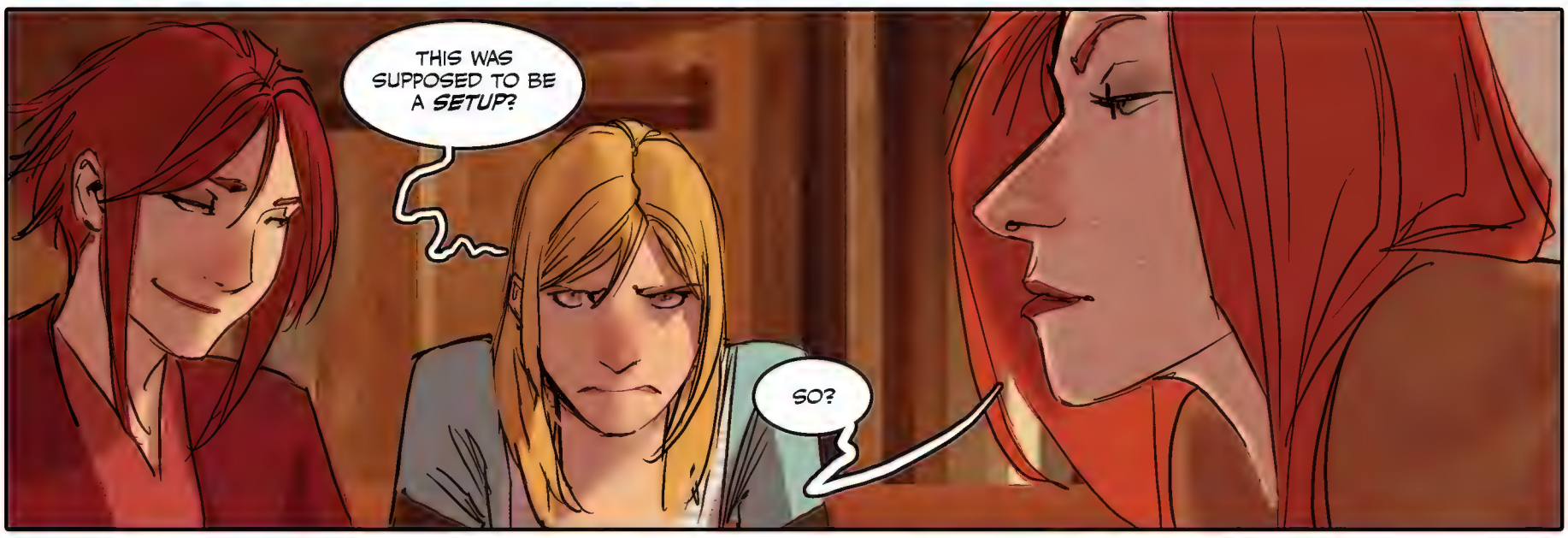

JUST DON'T PICK AT IT!
YES, "MOM!" BY THE WAY, HOW MANY SESSIONS DO YOU THINK WE HAVE LEFT?
TWELVE TO FIFTEEN.
W...WHAT!?!?
HEH, RELAX RED, FOR A MOMENT THERE YOU DID THE IMPOSSIBLE AND TURNED EVEN PALER! TWO SESSIONS LEFT, ONE, IF YOU CAN HANDLE A LONGER ONE!

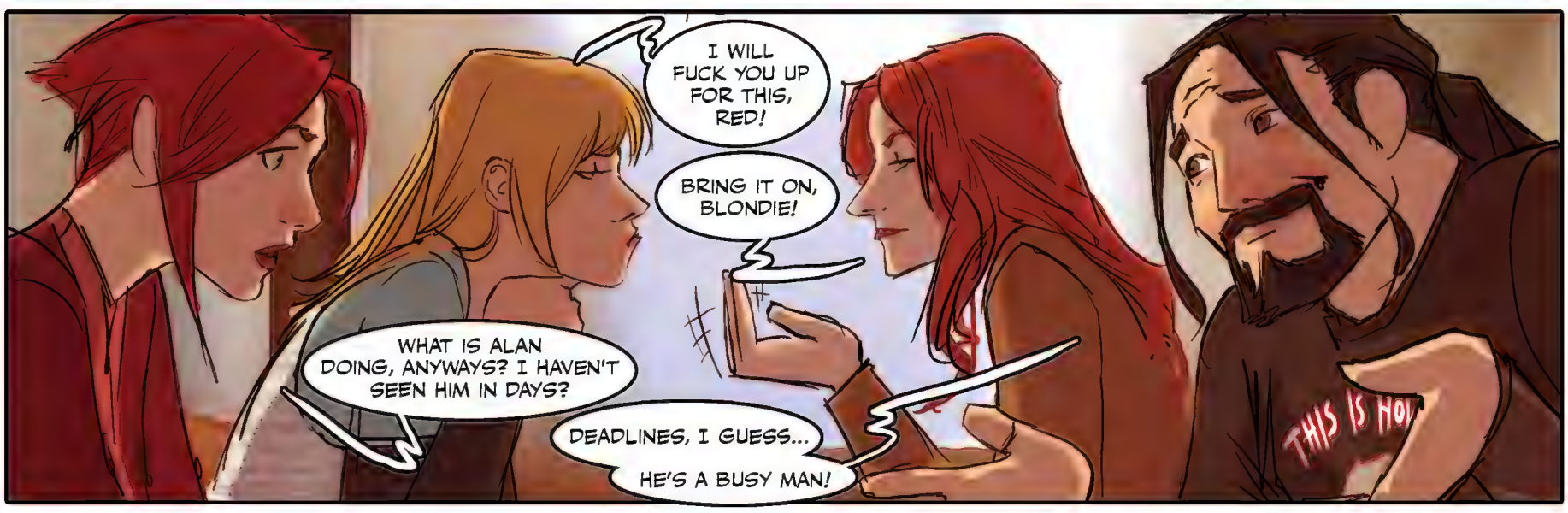

NOT... FUNNY.
OH, HEY HONEY!

HEYA, AND SAME TO YOU LADIES!
HEY, TOM!
THIS IS HOW I

WHERE IS HE???
OH, UM... ALAN...YEAH, ABOUT THAT...
I ASKED HIM...
THIS IS HOW I...
LUNCH? UM, I'M A BIT UNDER A DEADLINE, SOOO...
MY EYES ARE UP HERE
AW, COME ON, MAAAN! IT WON'T TAKE LONG. JUST YOU... MEEE...AND CASSIE... THAT'S ALL...
DUDE!
WHAT?
YOU CAN'T LIE FOR SHIT!
TELL YOUR WIFE TO GET A HOBBY OR SOMETHING.

I DON'T KNOW HOW HE SAW THROUGH THE *IMPENETRABLE* WALL THAT IS MY POKER FACE...
BABY, I WHOOP YOUR ASS AT POKER EVERY TIME...YOU DON'T *HAVE* A POKER FACE!


THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A *SETUP*?
SO?


I WILL FUCK YOU UP FOR THIS, RED!
BRING IT ON, BLONDIE!
WHAT IS ALAN DOING, ANYWAYS? I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN DAYS?
DEADLINES, I GUESS...
HE'S A BUSY MAN!

AH. THAT SOLITARY LIFE...
I KNEW IT ALL TOO WELL.

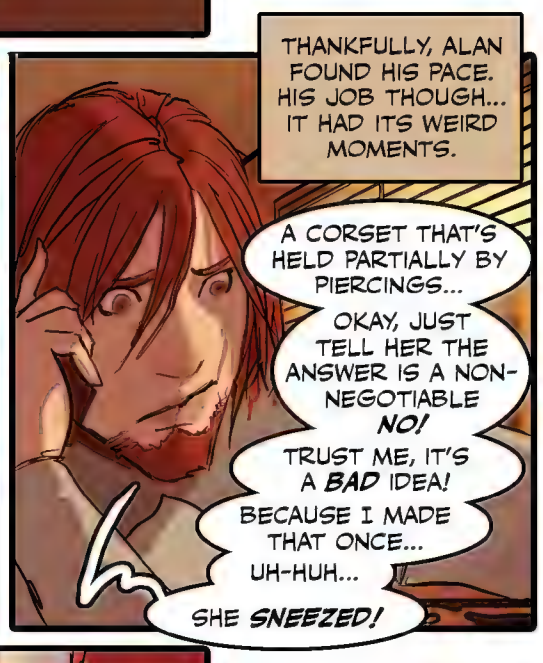
YOU GET TO TALK TO YOUR TV.

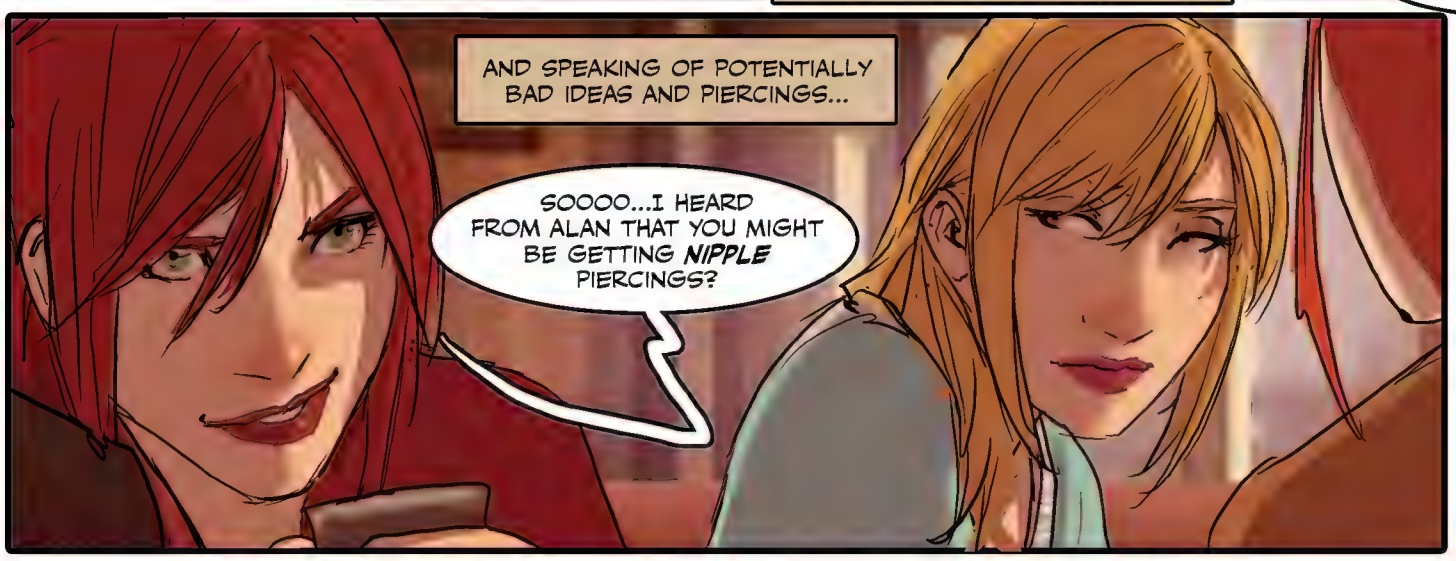
LEAD A RATHER FREQUENT, IF A LITTLE ONE-SIDED, SEXLIFE.

PROCRASTINATE...

FIND A HOBBY... LUCKY ONES MIGHT EVEN MAKE THEIR LIVING DOING WHAT THEY LOVE.

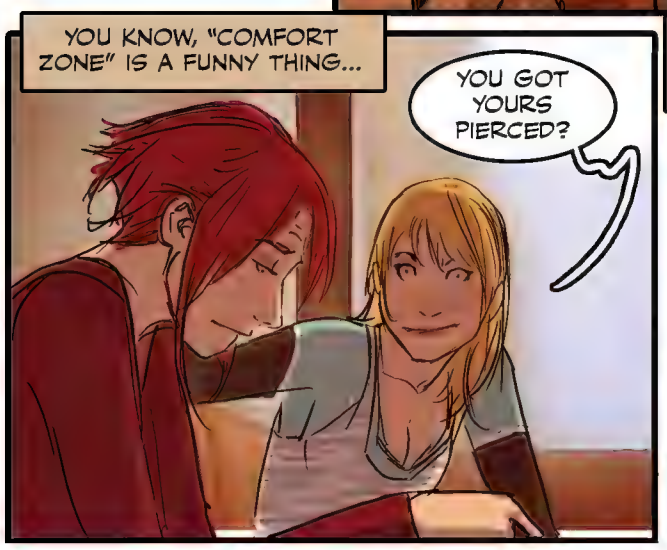
HEY, HARPER...
YEAH, IT'LL BE READY FOR THIS SATURDAY.
SURE, I'LL STOP BY TONIGHT...
OKAY?
SO WHAT DID SHE WANT?
IN THE END YOU FIND YOUR PACE IN THE SOLITUDE. WELL, EITHER THAT OR YOU GROW WEIRD...SHUT UP! MY SEXUAL TASTES DON'T COUNT!

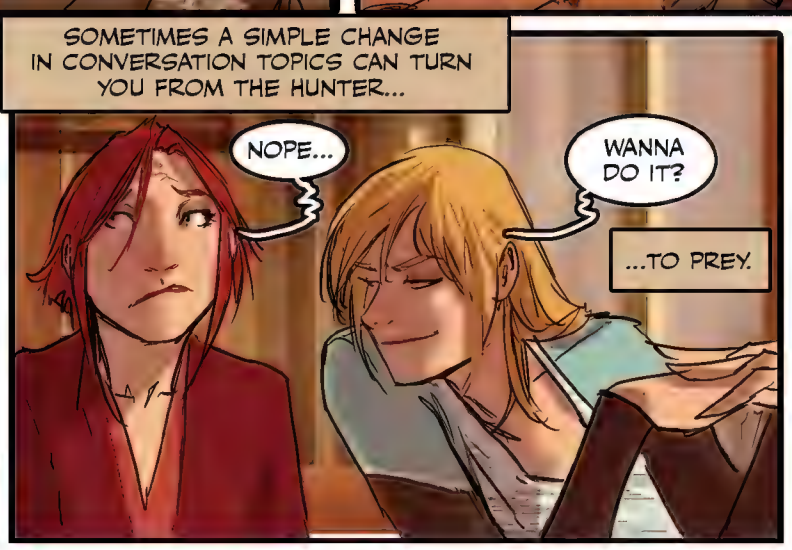

THANKFULLY, ALAN FOUND HIS PACE. HIS JOB THOUGH... IT HAD ITS WEIRD MOMENTS.
A CORSET THAT'S HELD PARTIALLY BY PIERCINGS...
OKAY, JUST TELL HER THE ANSWER IS A NON-NEGOTIABLE NO!
TRUST ME, IT'S A BAD IDEA!
BECAUSE I MADE THAT ONCE...
UH-HUH...
SHE SNEEZED!

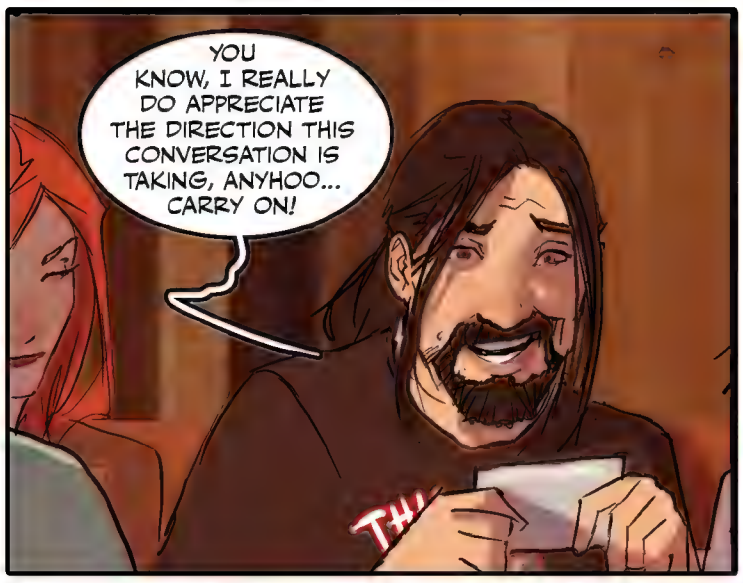

AND SPEAKING OF POTENTIALLY BAD IDEAS AND PIERCINGS...
SOOOO...I HEARD FROM ALAN THAT YOU MIGHT BE GETTING NIPPLE PIERCINGS?

YOU HAD TO BLAB!
I HAD TO BRAG!

YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS! YOU KNOW THAT!?
WITH INTEREST, HONEY!

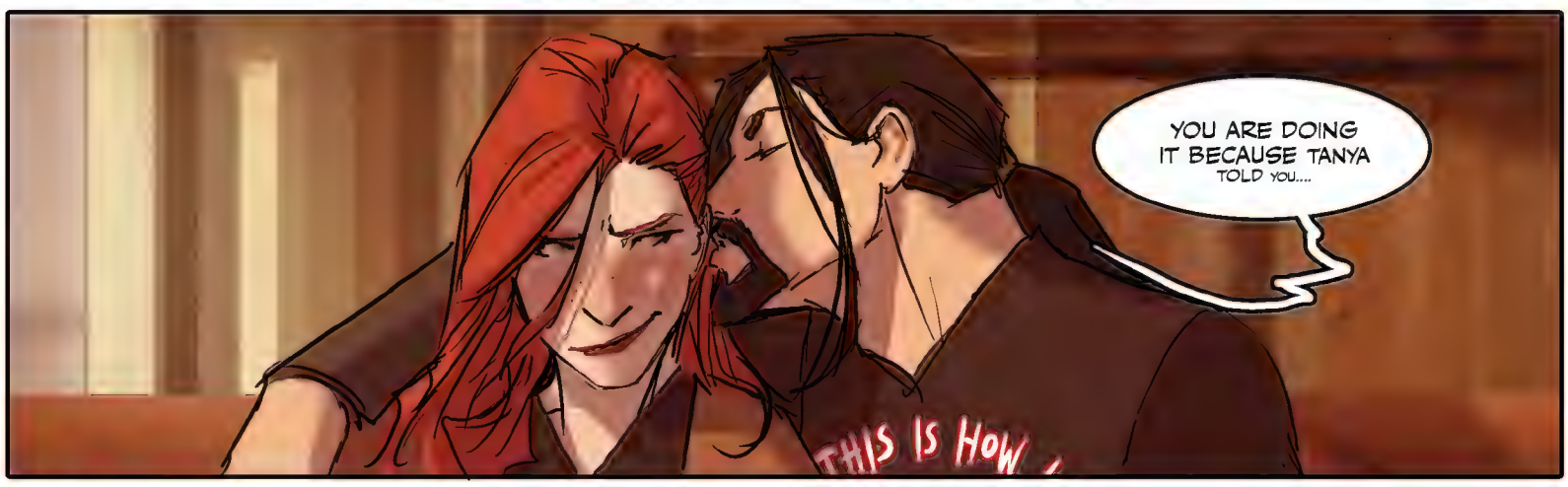

YOU KNOW, "COMFORT ZONE" IS A FUNNY THING...
YOU GOT YOURS PIERCED?

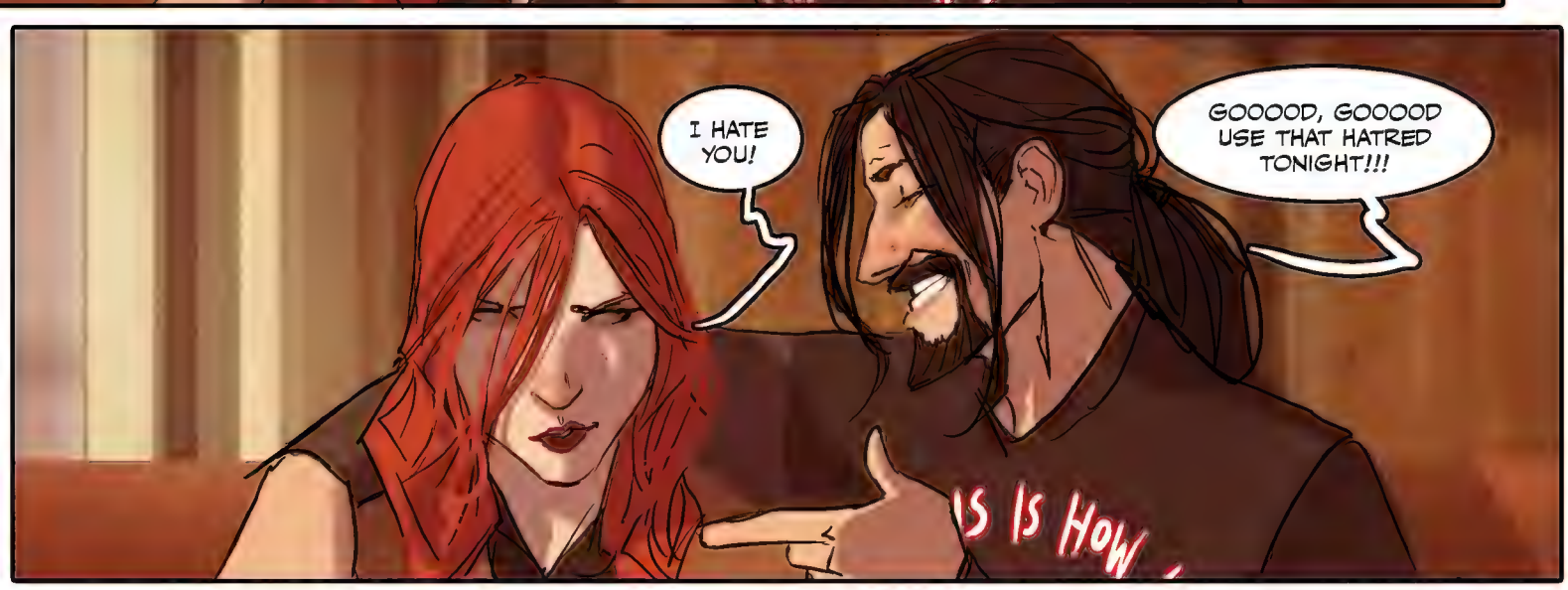

SOMETIMES A SIMPLE CHANGE IN CONVERSATION TOPICS CAN TURN YOU FROM THE HUNTER...
NOPE...
WANNA DO IT?
...TO PREY.

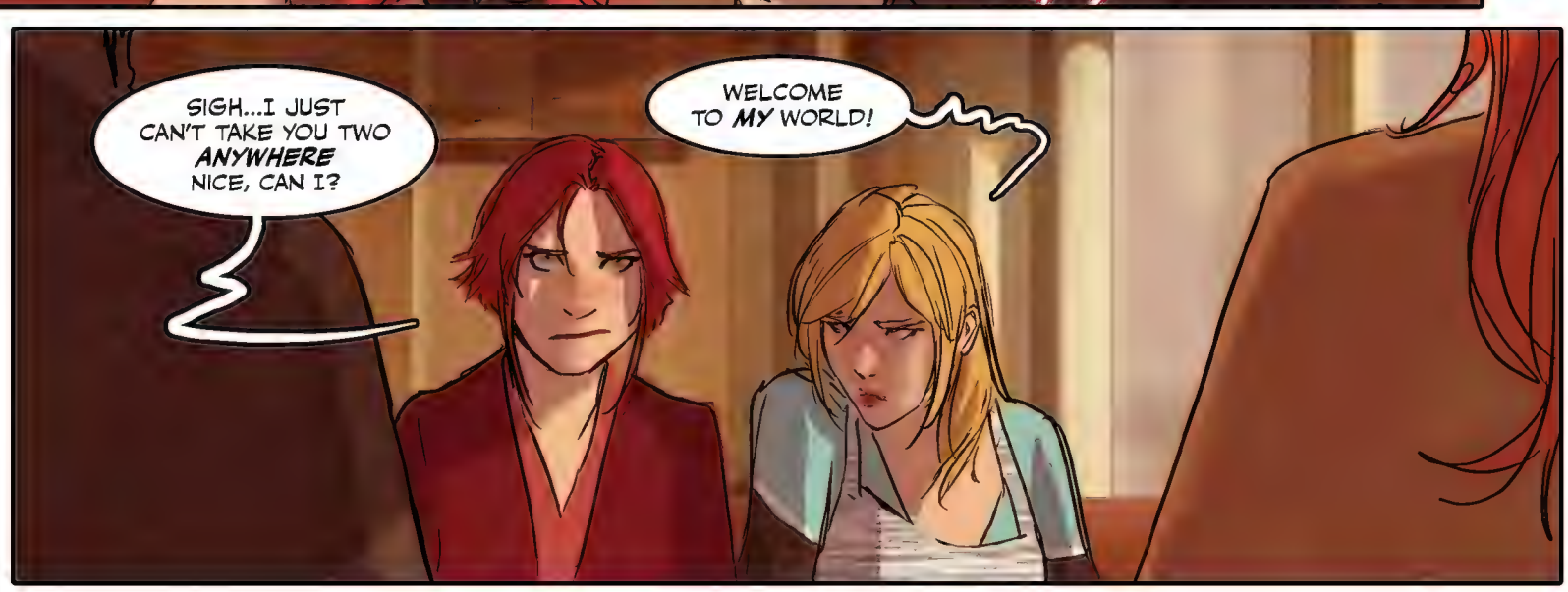

YOU KNOW, I REALLY DO APPRECIATE THE DIRECTION THIS CONVERSATION IS TAKING, ANYHOO... CARRY ON!

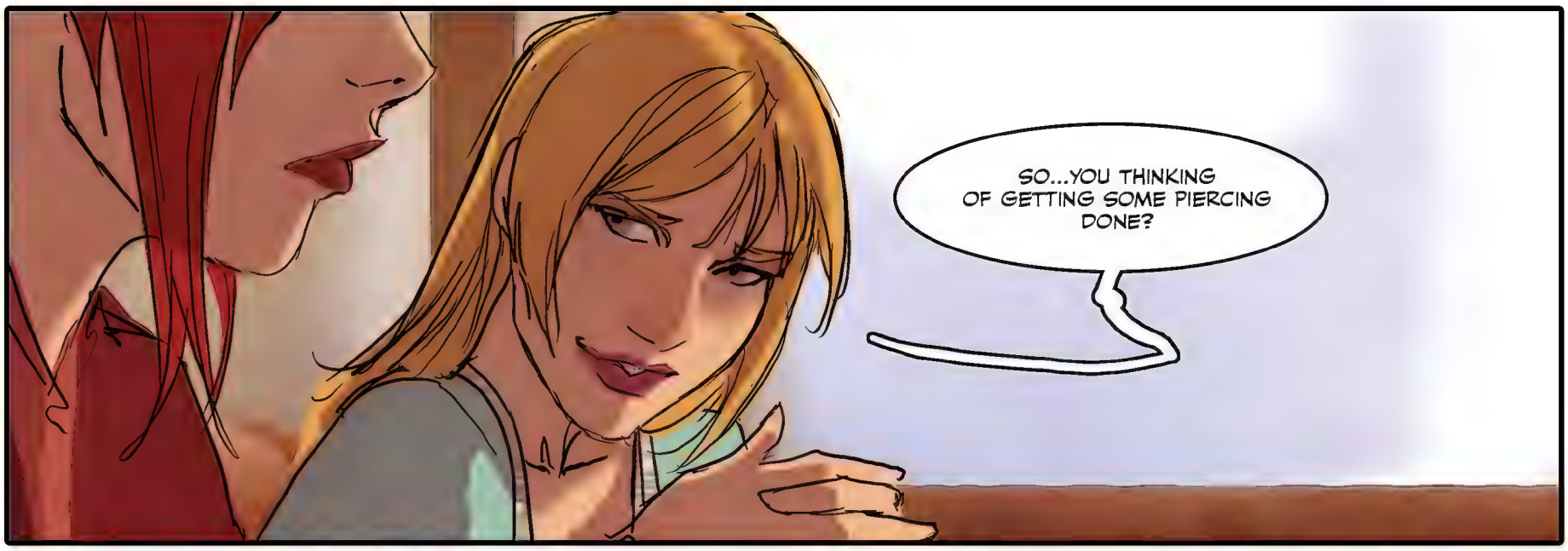
ENJOYING YOURSELF?
IMMENSELY! AS YOU WILL I'M SURE!

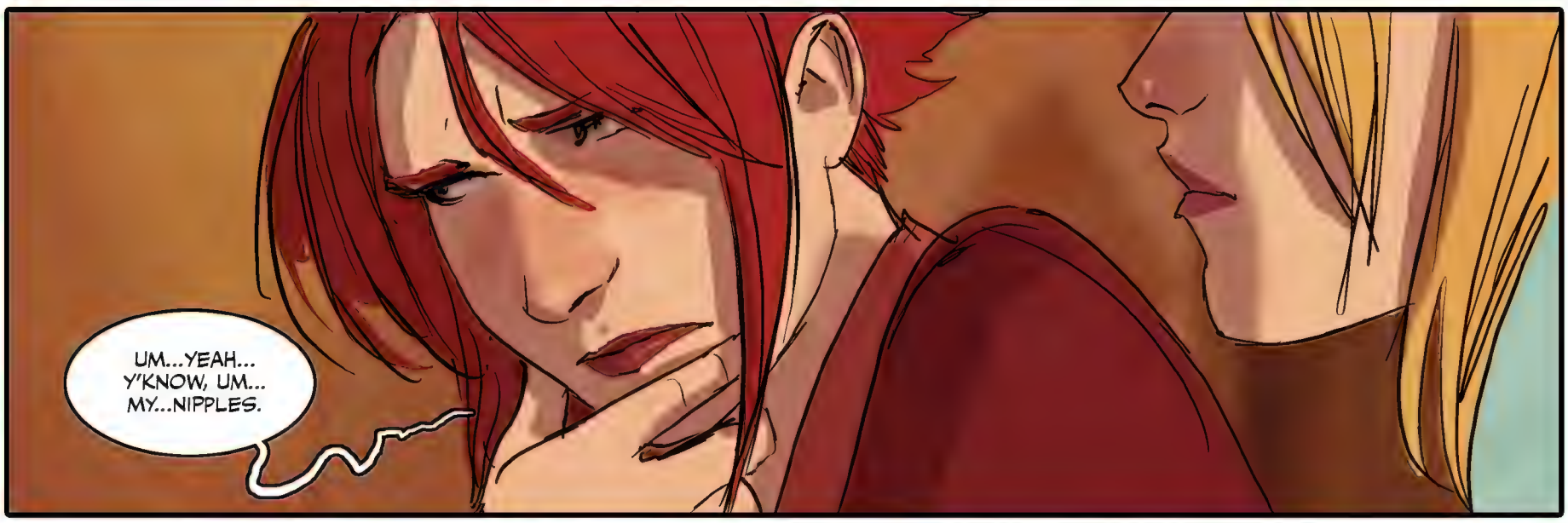
YOU KNOW, I'M ONLY DOING THAT FOR *YOU*.
YEEEAAHH... NO YOU'RE NOT!

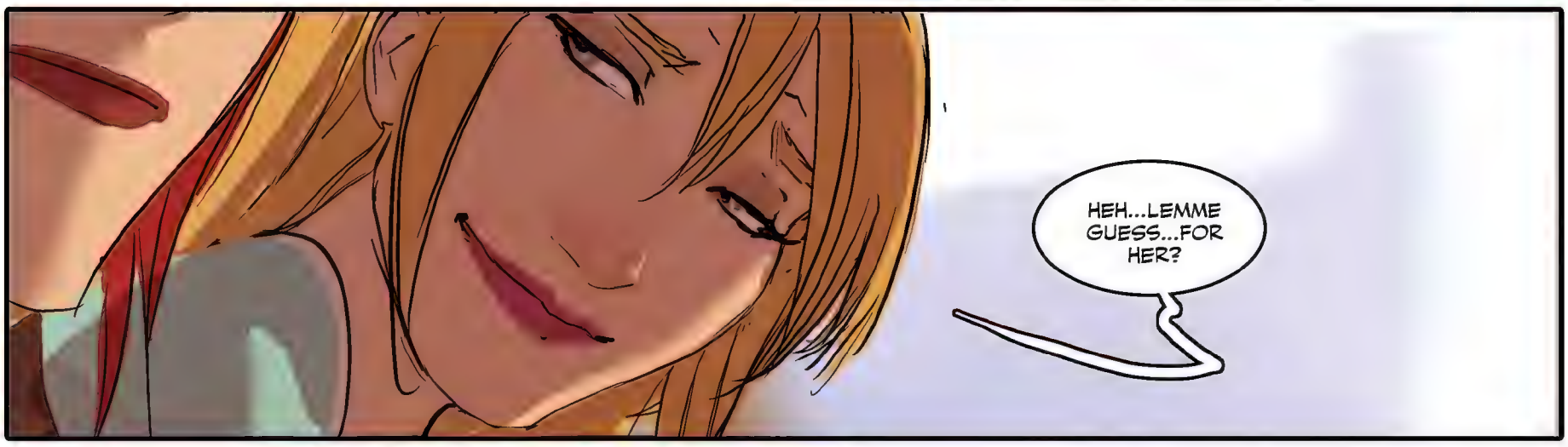

YOU ARE DOING IT BECAUSE TANYA TOLD YOU....

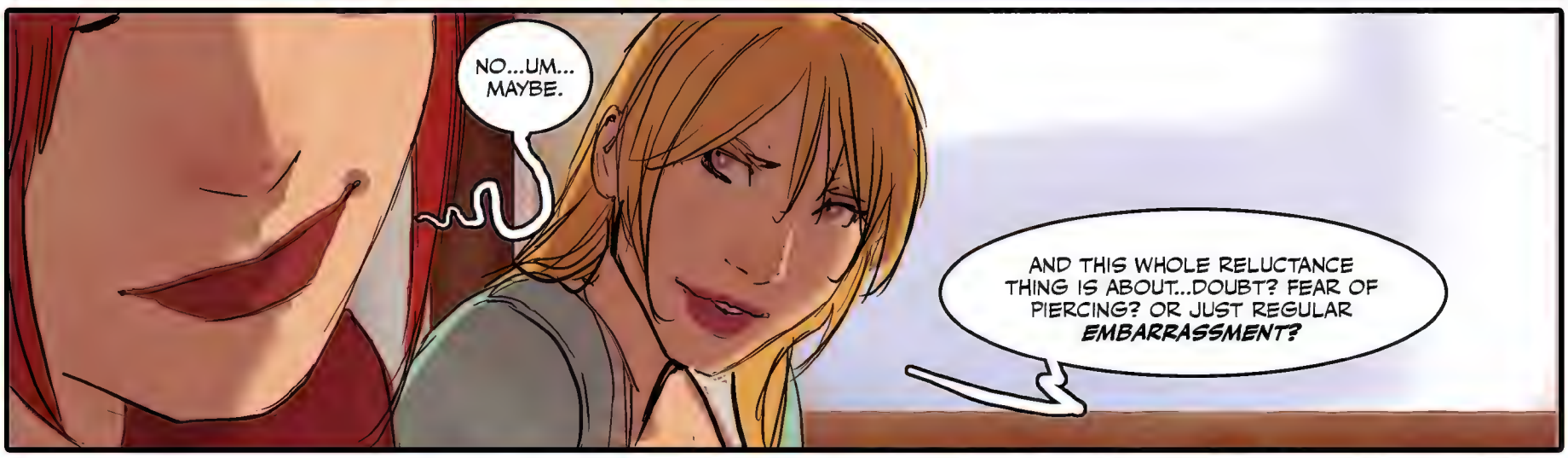

I HATE YOU!
GOOOOD, GOOOOD USE THAT HATRED TONIGHT!!!


SIGH...I JUST CAN'T TAKE YOU TWO *ANYWHERE* NICE, CAN I?
WELCOME TO *MY* WORLD!


SO...YOU THINKING OF GETTING SOME PIERCING DONE?

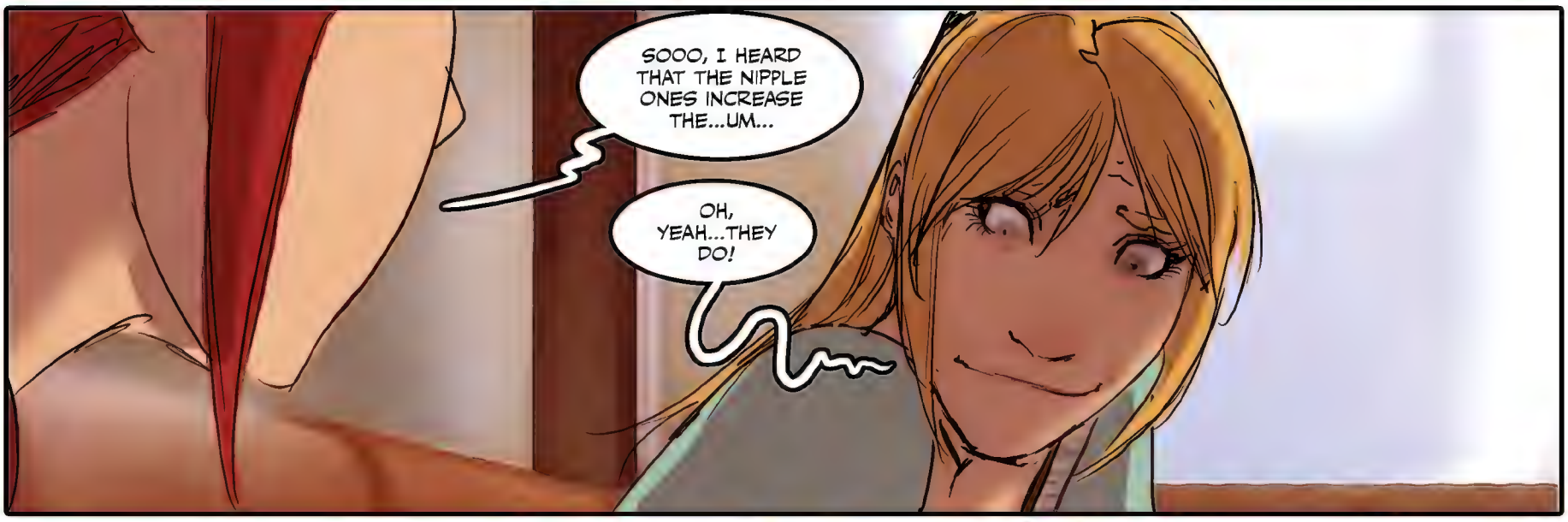

UM...YEAH... Y'KNOW, UM... MY...NIPPLES.

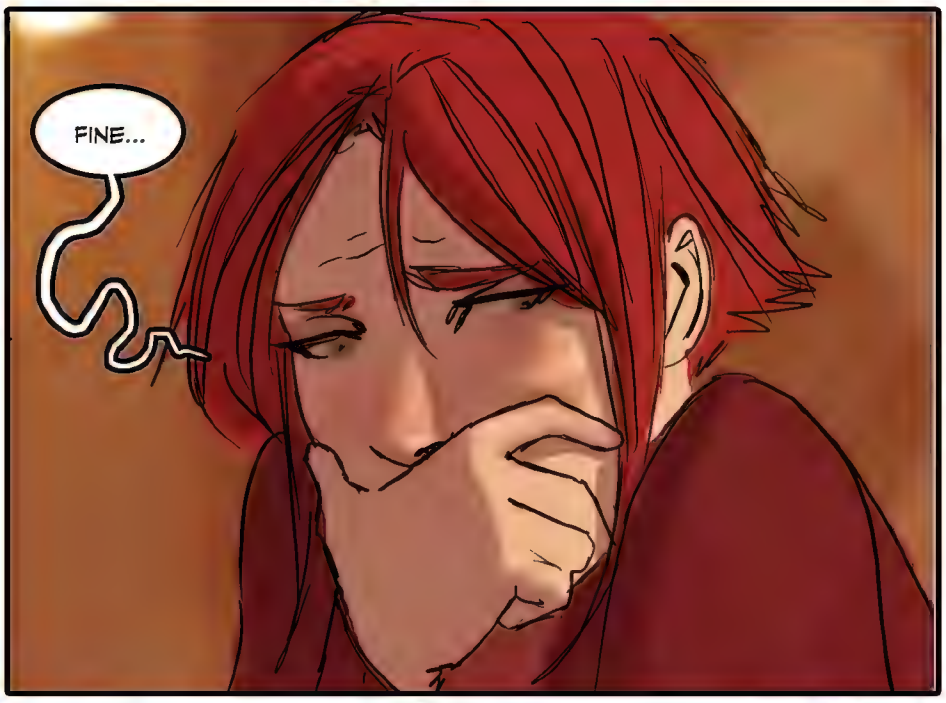

HEH...LEMME GUESS...FOR HER?

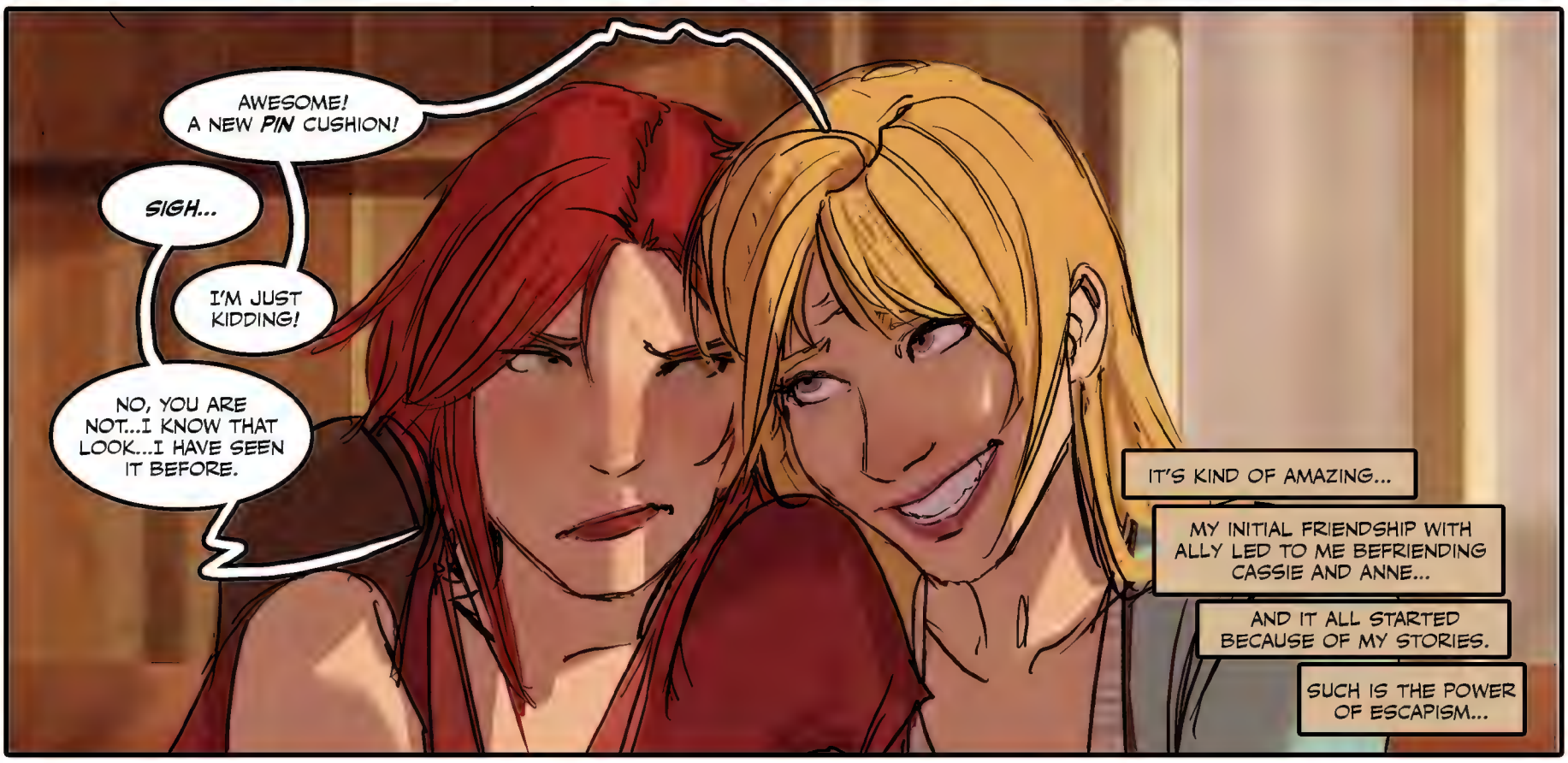

NO...UM... MAYBE.
AND THIS WHOLE RELUCTANCE THING IS ABOUT...DOUBT? FEAR OF PIERCING? OR JUST REGULAR *EMBARRASSMENT?*

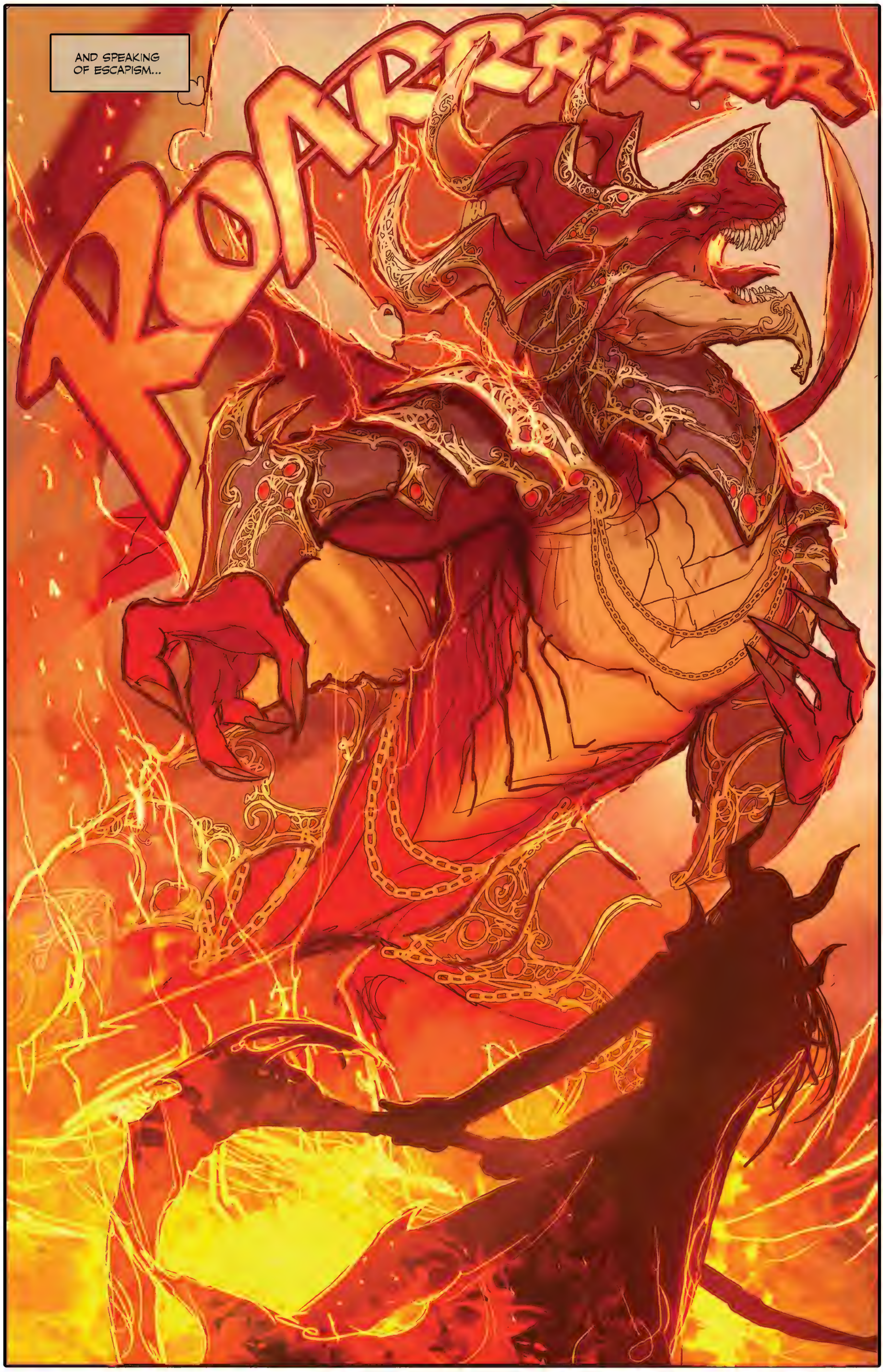
A BIT OF EACH.
WELL, I CAN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR DOUBT OR EMBARRASSMENT, BUT THE PAIN IS NOT ALL THAT BAD...IT'S A BIT ANNOYING WHILE IT HEALS, BUT IF YOU TAKE CARE OF THEM, THEY SHOULD HEAL RELATIVELY FAST.

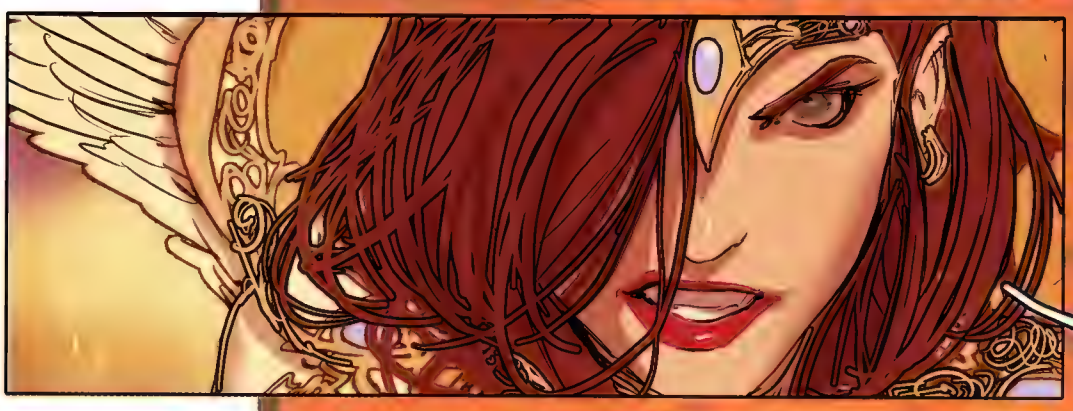
SO YOU...
AW, YEAH! NIPPLES AND...
BLEEEGH!
WOAH!


SOOO, I HEARD THAT THE NIPPLE ONES INCREASE THE...UM...
OH, YEAH...THEY DO!

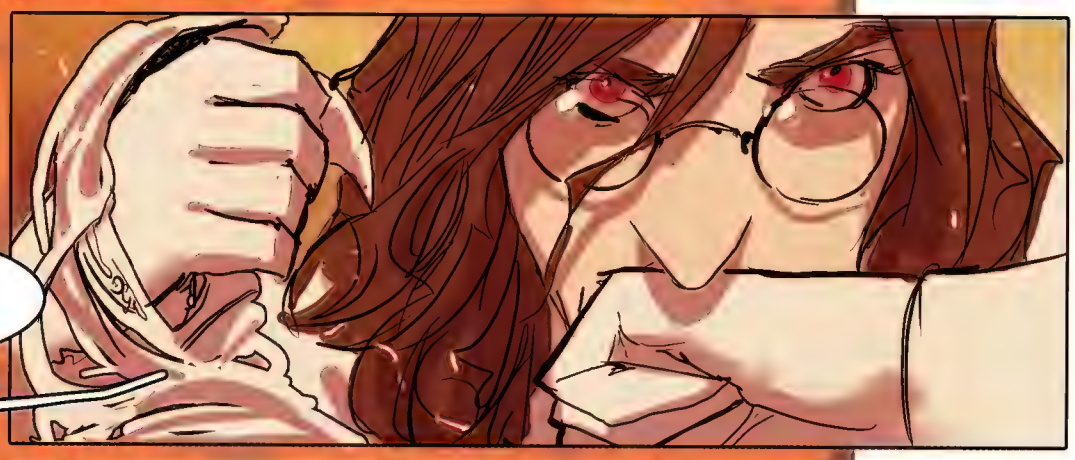

FINE...


AWESOME! A NEW *PIN* CUSHION!
SIGH...
I'M JUST KIDDING!
NO, YOU ARE NOT...I KNOW THAT LOOK...I HAVE SEEN IT BEFORE.
IT'S KIND OF AMAZING...
MY INITIAL FRIENDSHIP WITH ALLY LED TO ME BEFRIENDING CASSIE AND ANNE...
AND IT ALL STARTED BECAUSE OF MY STORIES.
SUCH IS THE POWER OF ESCAPISM...

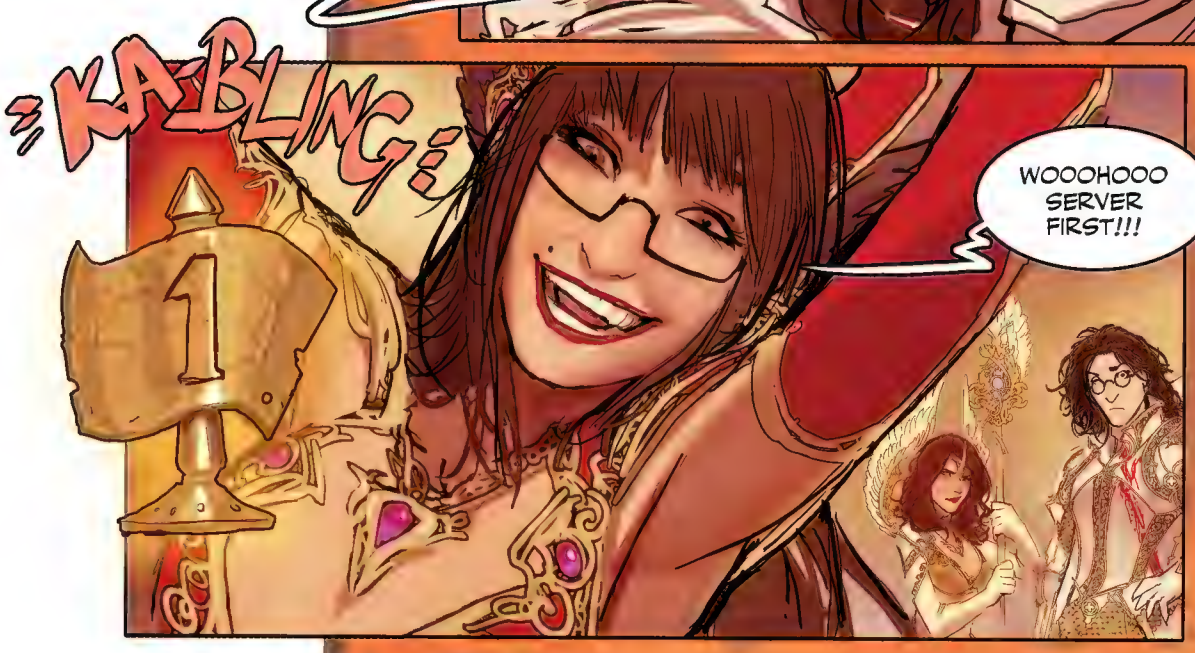

AND SPEAKING OF ESCAPISM...
ROARRRRRR



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! THERE CAN'T BE ANY MORE PHASES, I LITERALLY HAVE ZERO MANA POTIONS LEFT!



SO, HOW LONG 'TIL WE KNOW?



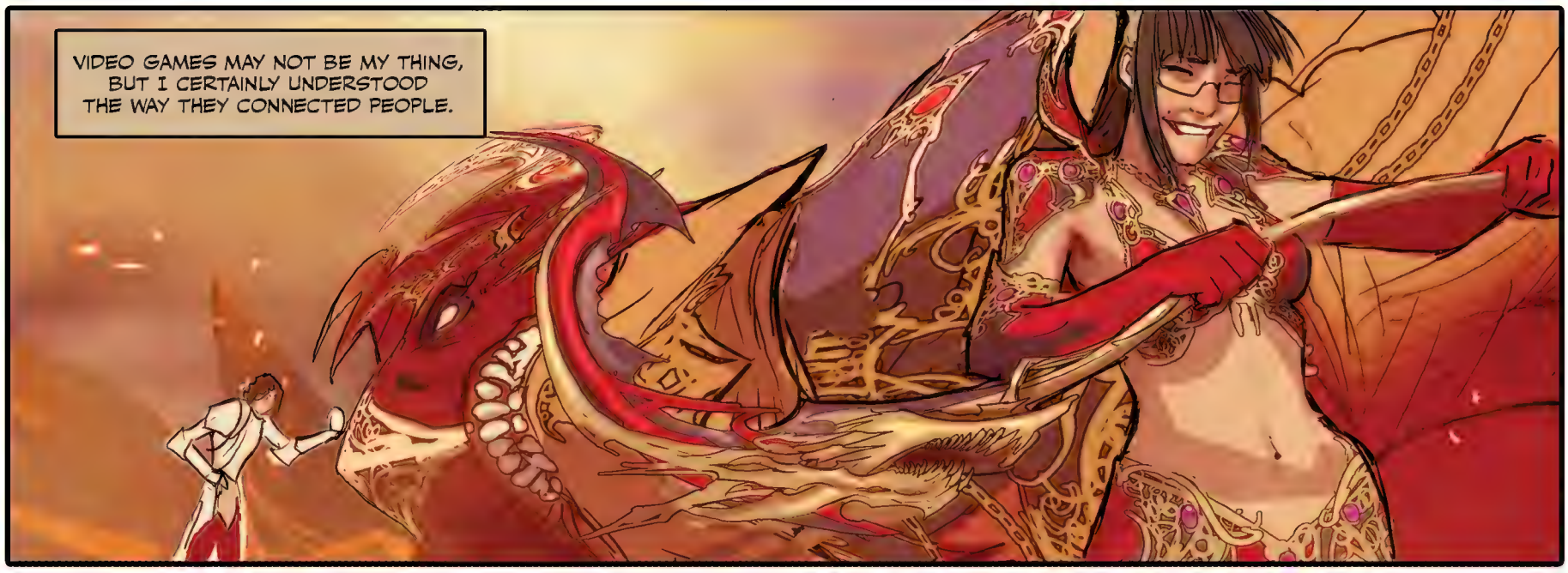
AHEM...THIS APPARENTLY MATTERS... FOR ***SOME*** REASON.

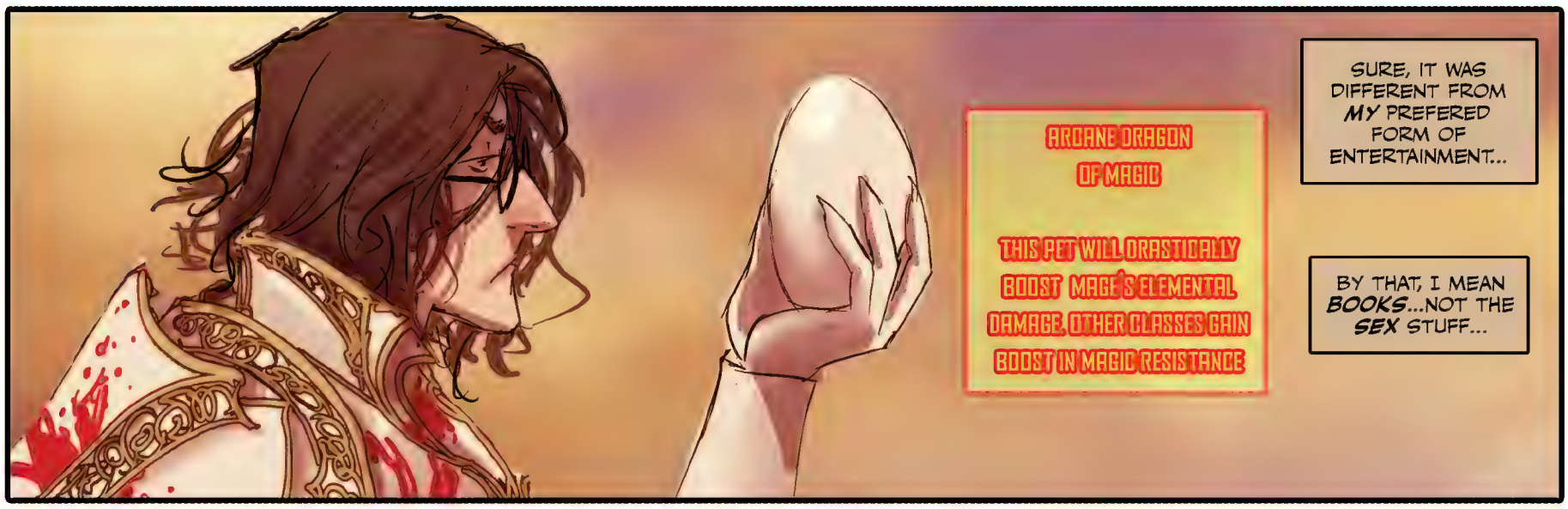
SHE'S BEEN AFTER ANY SERVER-FIRST ACHIEVEMENT FOR OVER A YEAR NOW, VLAD.

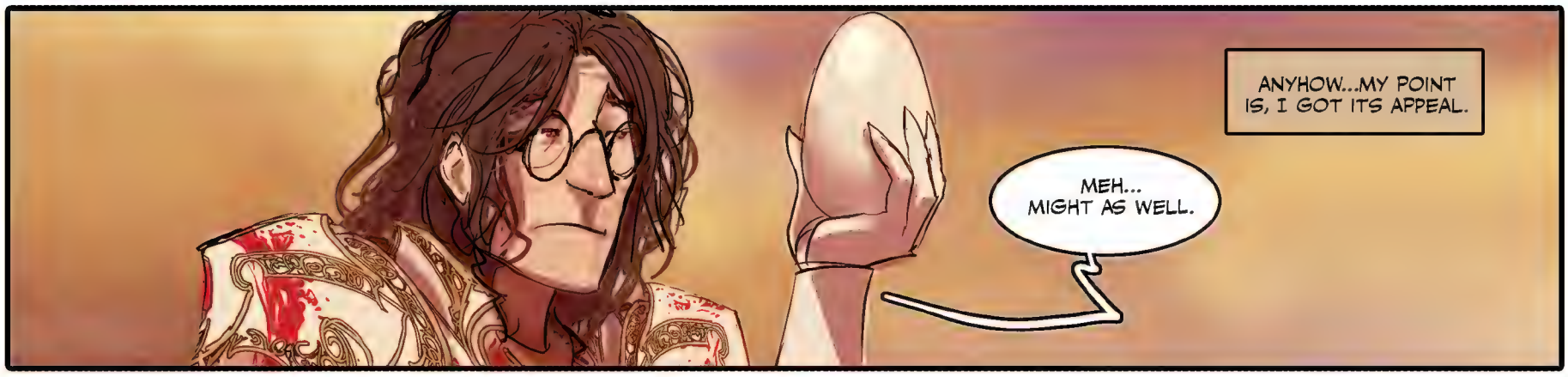
LET HER HAVE THIS.

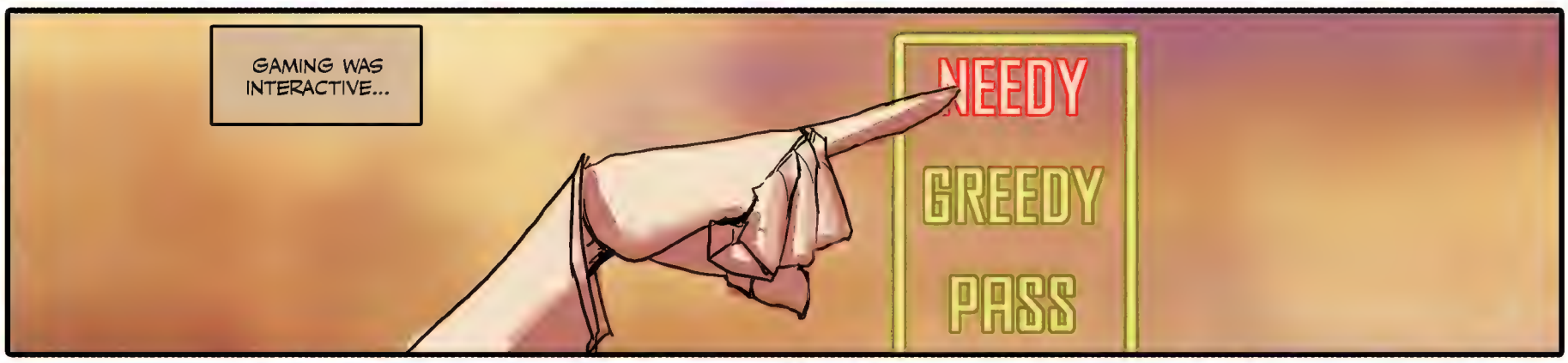
ANYHOO...ALLY'S FAVORITE FORM OF ESCAPISM WAS SOME ONLINE GAME.

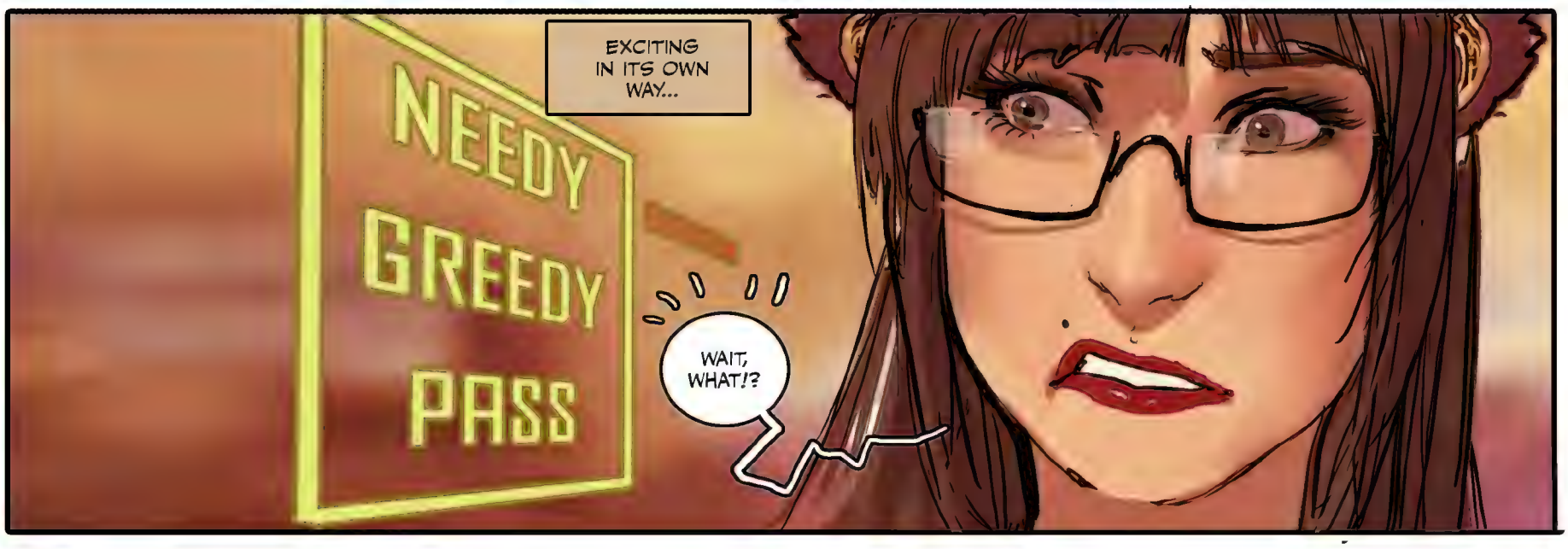
DON'T ASK ME WHICH! THEY ALL LOOKED THE SAME TO ME.

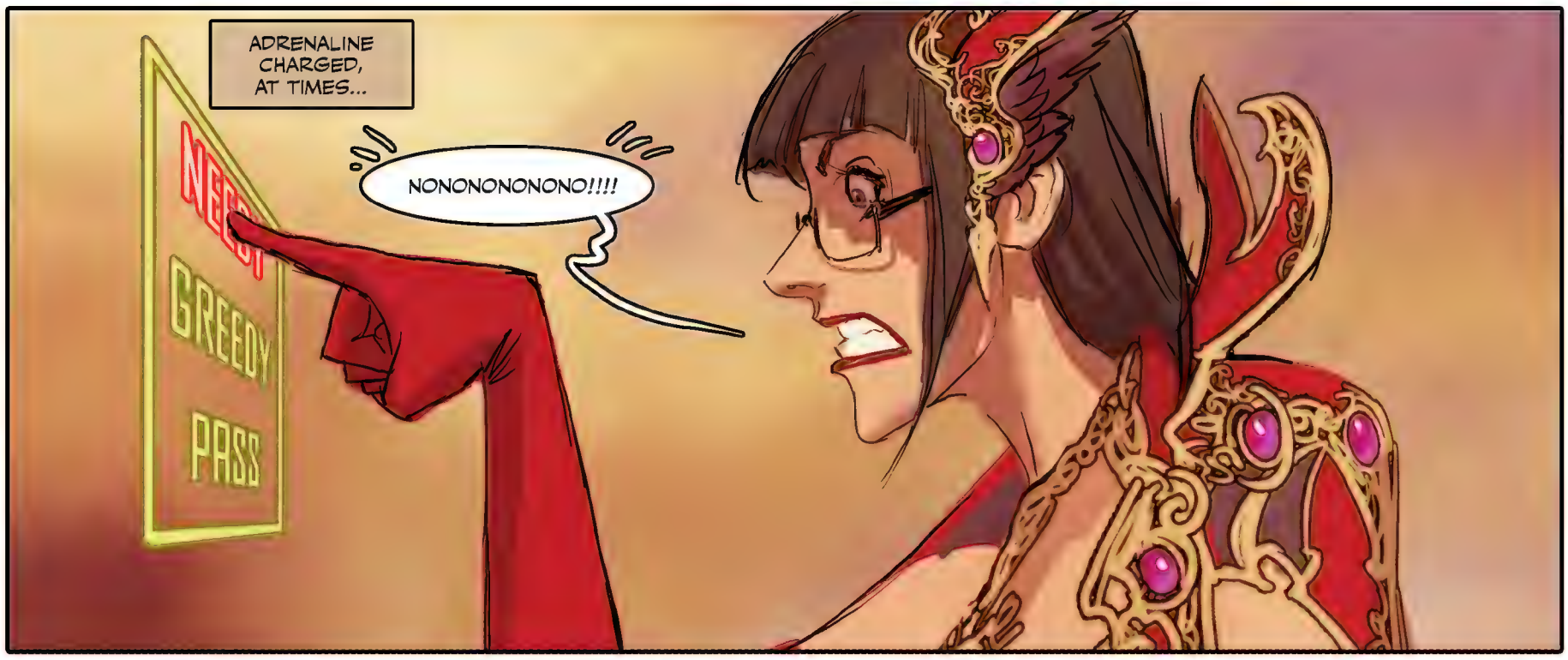

VIDEO GAMES MAY NOT BE MY THING, BUT I CERTAINLY UNDERSTOOD THE WAY THEY CONNECTED PEOPLE.


ARCANE DRAGON OF MAGIC
THIS PET WILL DRASTICALLY BOOST MAGE'S ELEMENTAL DAMAGE. OTHER CLASSES GAIN BOOST IN MAGIC RESISTANCE
SURE, IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM MY PREFERED FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT...
BY THAT, I MEAN BOOKS...NOT THE SEX STUFF...

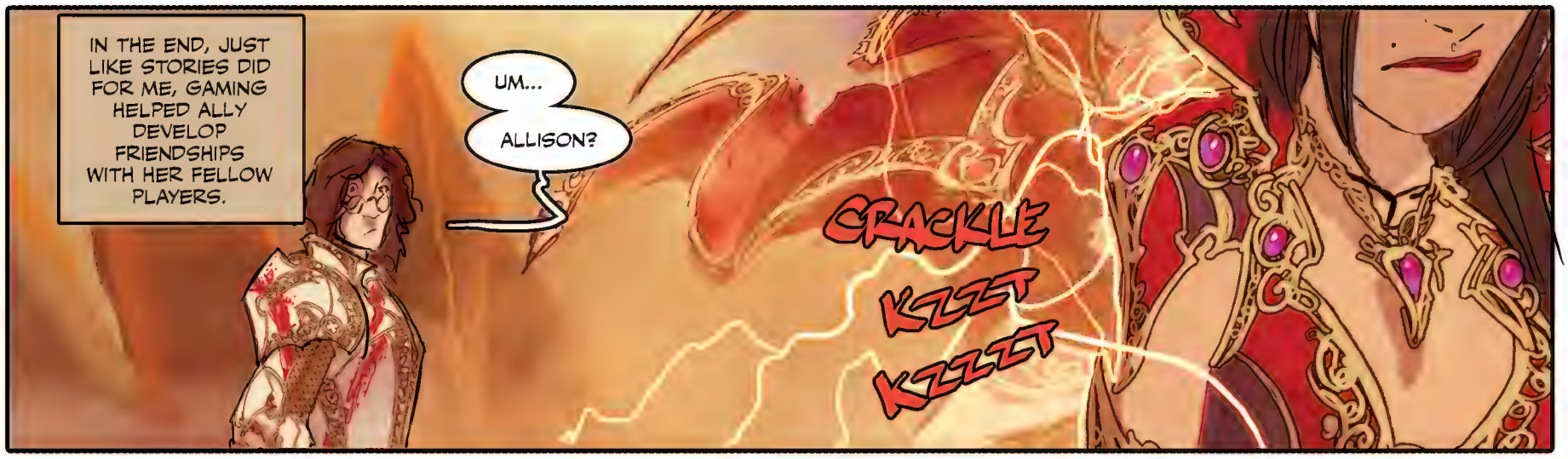

ANYHOW...MY POINT IS, I GOT ITS APPEAL.
MEH... MIGHT AS WELL.


GAMING WAS INTERACTIVE...
NEEDY GREEDY PASS


EXCITING IN ITS OWN WAY...
NEEDY GREEDY PASS
WAIT, WHAT!?


ADRENALINE CHARGED, AT TIMES...
NONONONONONO!!!!
GREEDY
PASS

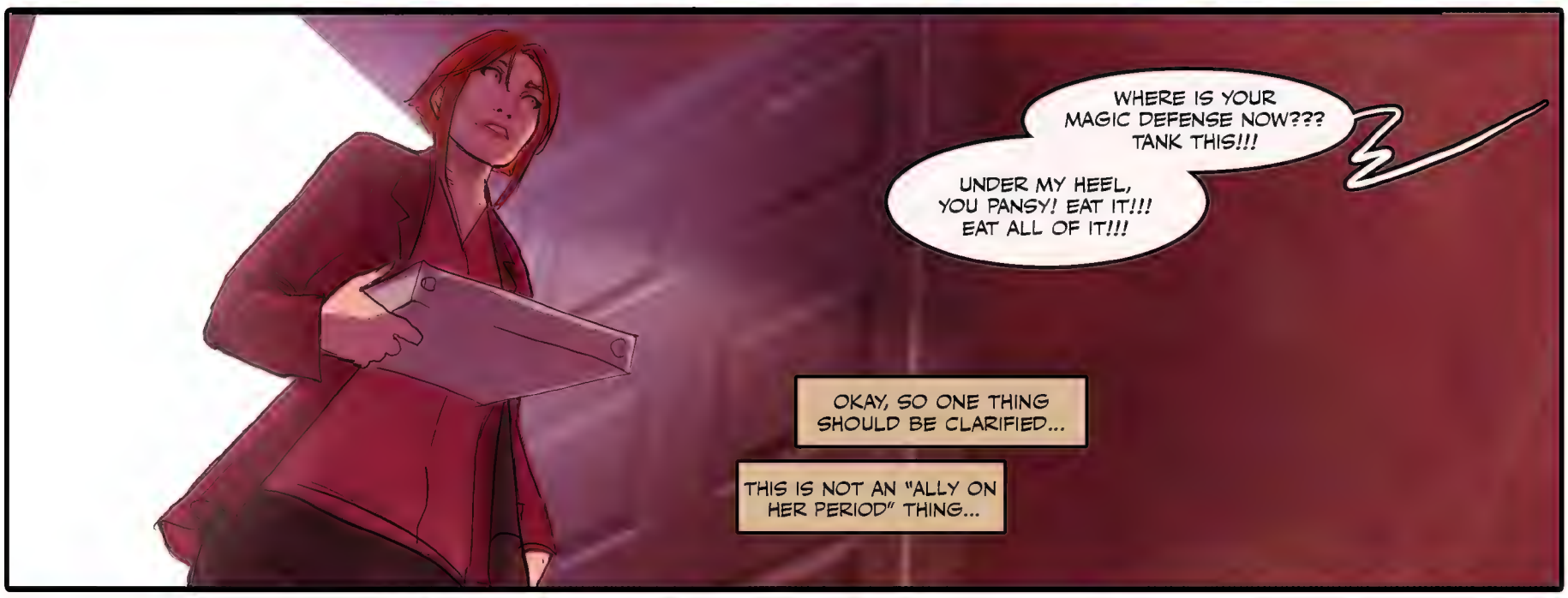
HEY, I GOT A PET!
ACCOUNT BOUND
AND IN THE AGE OF INTERNET, GAMES EVOLVED.
ALLY PLAYED WITH PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.


IN THE END, JUST LIKE STORIES DID FOR ME, GAMING HELPED ALLY DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS WITH HER FELLOW PLAYERS.
UM...
ALLISON?
CRACKLE
KZZZT
KZZZT

YOU STUPID...
NO GOOD...
CASHOARING...
IT WAS A DEEP SENSE OF CAMARADERIE BASED ON MUTUAL RESPE...
WELL...
FWOOOOOOOOM

YES...
NOOB!!!

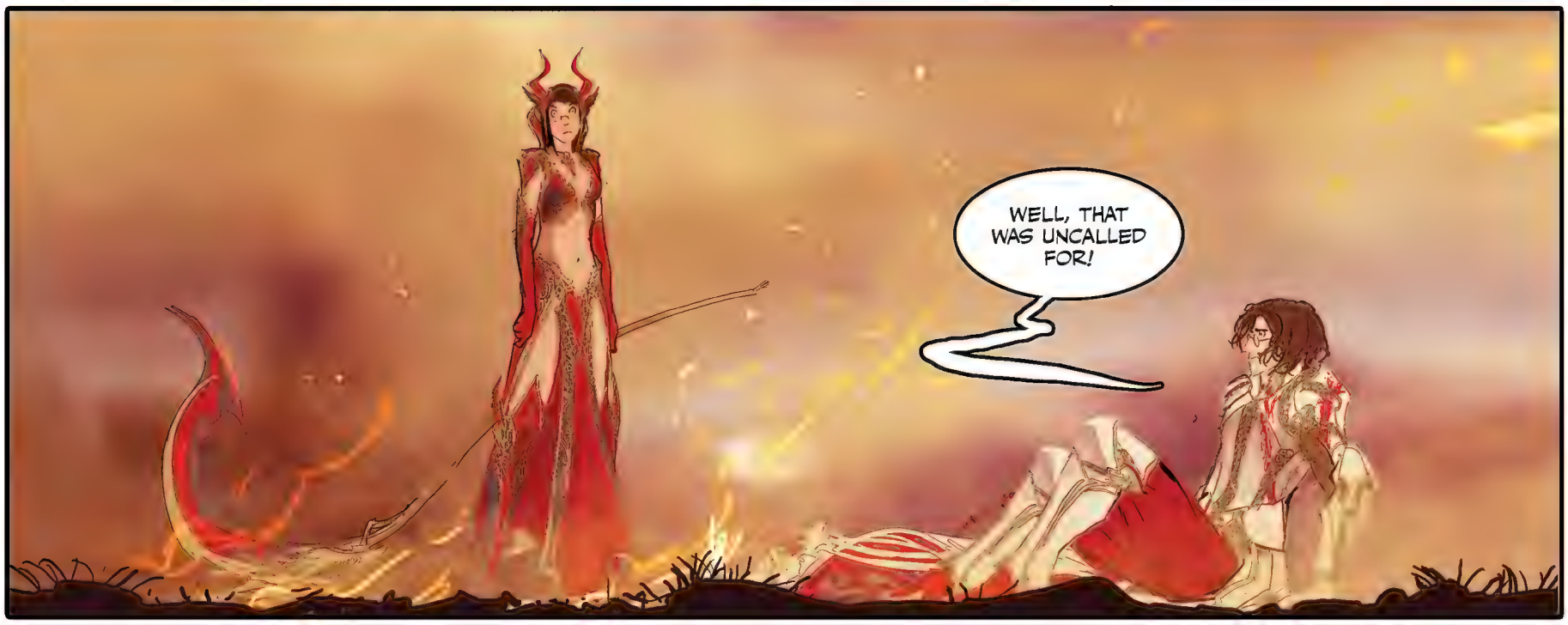
IT WAS ALSO A NICE VENT FOR PENT-UP STRESS AND AGGRESSION...
YOU AND ME! DUEL! NOW!!!


WHERE IS YOUR MAGIC DEFENSE NOW??? TANK THIS!!!
UNDER MY HEEL, YOU PANSY! EAT IT!!! EAT ALL OF IT!!!
OKAY, SO ONE THING SHOULD BE CLARIFIED...
THIS IS NOT AN "ALLY ON HER PERIOD" THING...

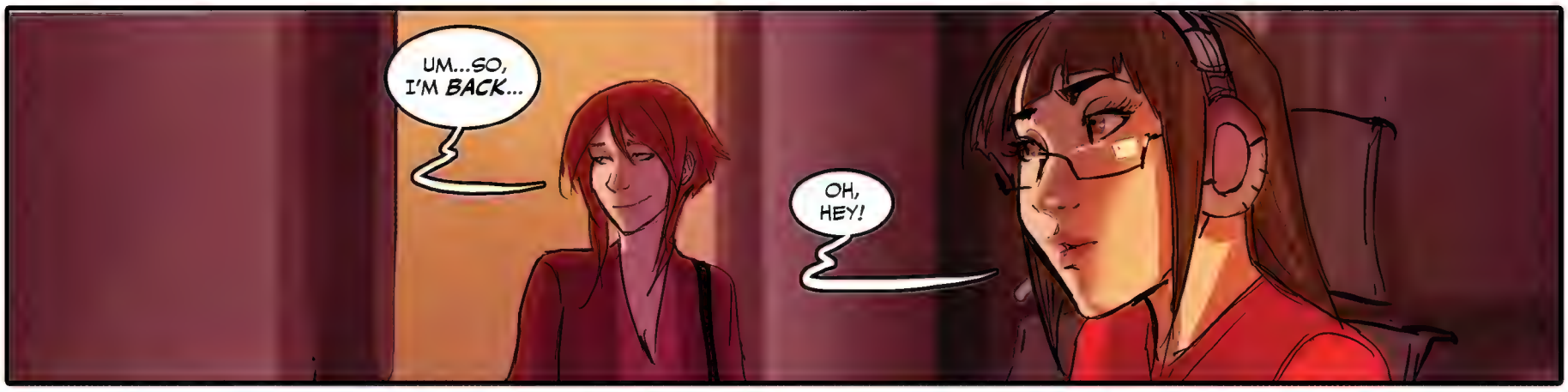
THIS IS A "PISSED-OFF ALLY" THING.
THIS TENDS TO HAPPEN A LITTLE TOO OFTEN.
ALLY'S
EAT YOUR BREAKFAST OF PAIN, YOU LOOT-HOGGING, NINJAING ASSHOLE!!!!

I MEAN, SURE, I TOO LOSE MY SHIT EVERY NOW AND THEN. I AM, HOWEVER, FAR LESS... VOCAL ABOUT IT.
I HOPE.
YOU THINK I DON'T HAVE MONEY? I GOT MONEY BUT I PREFER PLAYING MY GAME WITH PURE, MOTHERF%$KING...

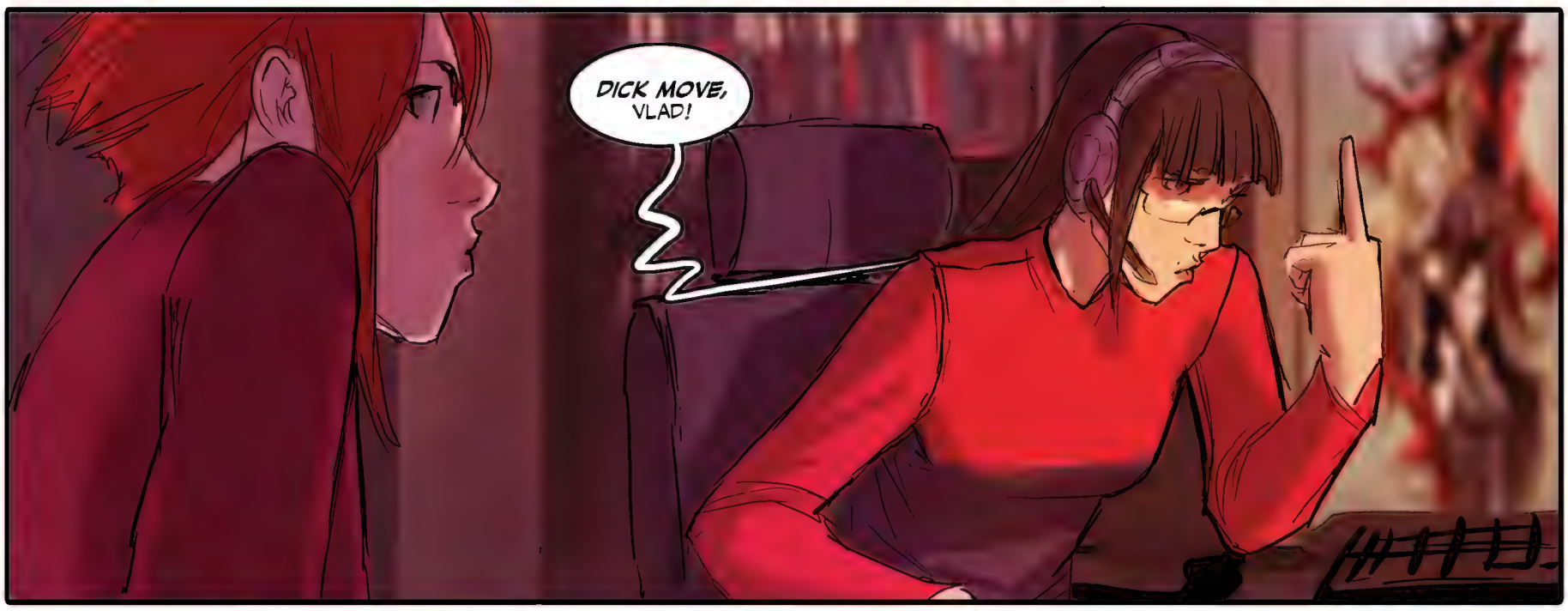
SKILL!!!!


WELL, THAT WAS UNCALLED FOR!

TOC TOC
HEY?...YOU THERE?


UM...SO, I'M BACK...
OH, HEY!

HEY!!!

WELL, THIS WAS FUN!
R.I.P.

DICK MOVE, VLAD!

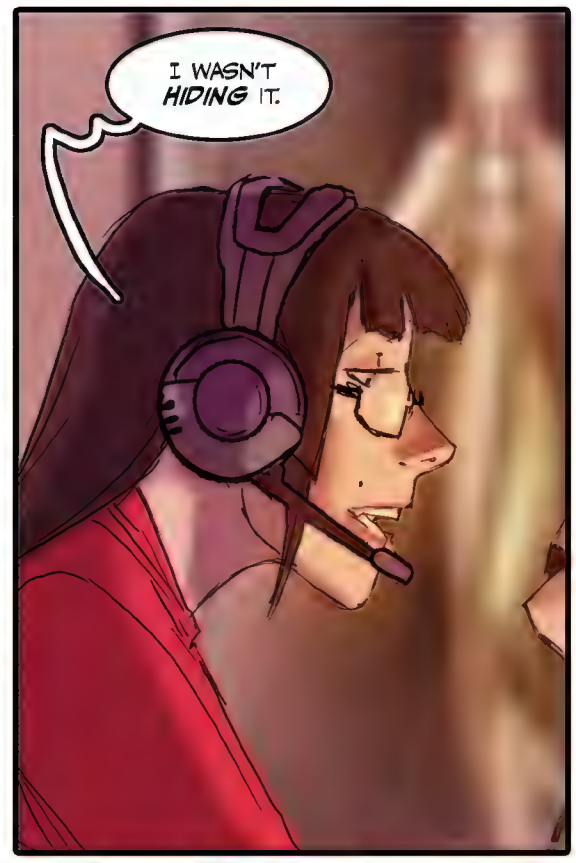
SO, THIS IS YOUR ROOM...

YEAH...

IT'S... NICE!

THANKS.

DON'T REALLY SEE WHY YOU WERE HIDING IT THE FIRST NIGHT.


I WASN'T *HIDING* IT.

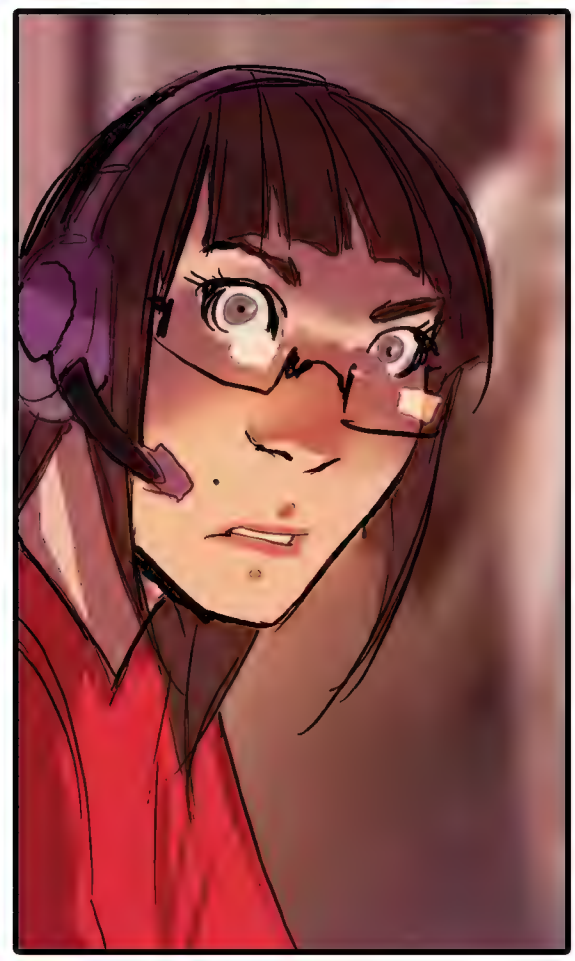
COULDA FOOLED ME!

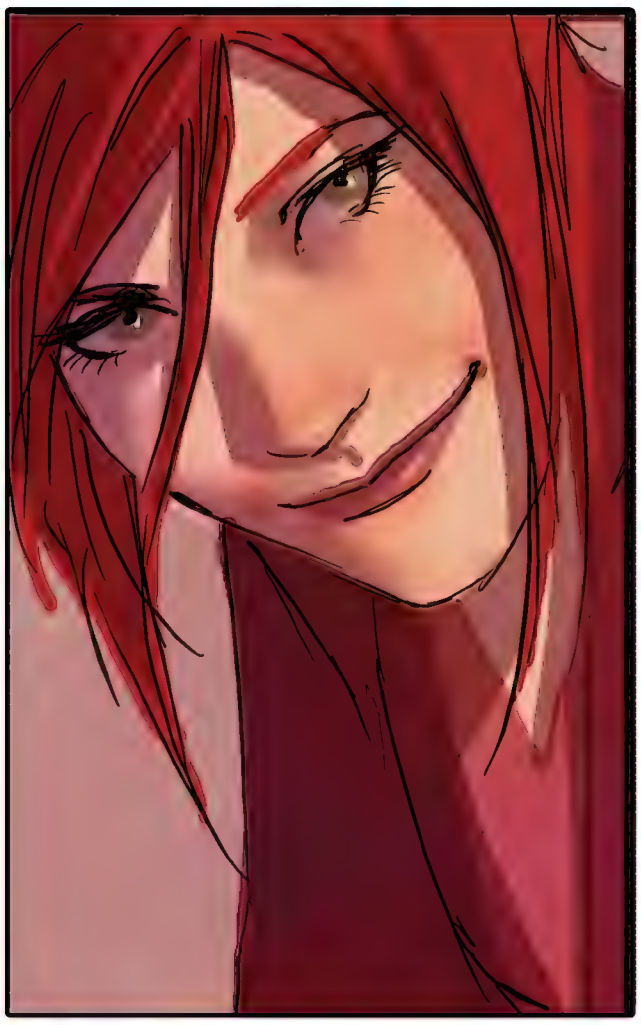
I JUST WANTED US TO STAY ON...UM...THE *TOPIC*. THIS WAS NOT THE *TOYROOM* I WAS PLANNING TO SHOW YOU THAT NIGHT.

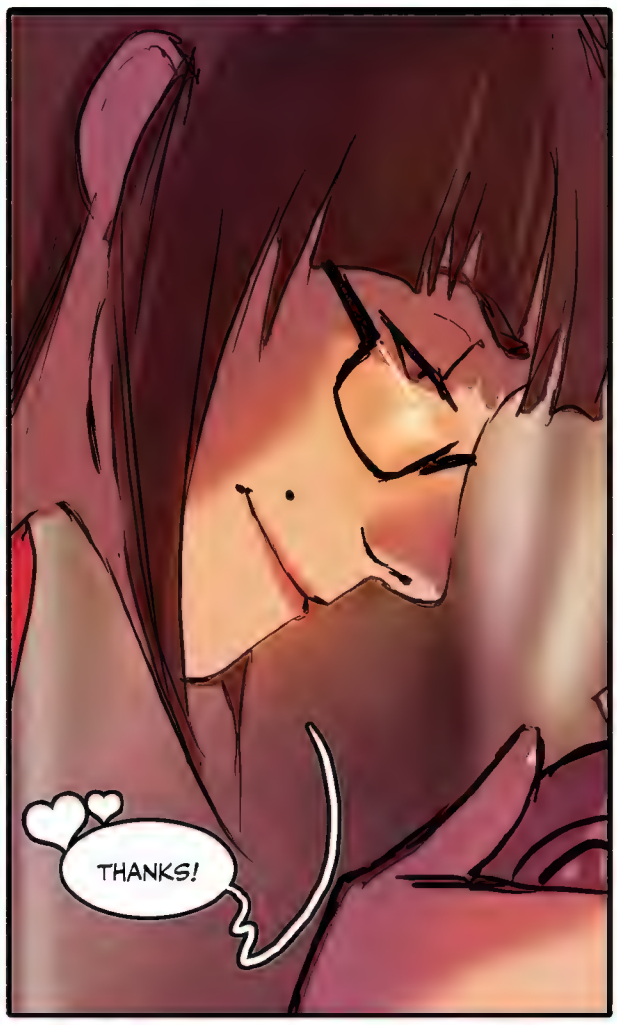
HEH... FAIR POINT.
HOW WAS YOUR LUNCH?
INTERESTING...

I'M GETTING A TATTOO.
OH?
NOTHING BIG...
A WINGED HEART.

HEH...ON YOUR *BUTT?*
YUP!
COOL!
YEEEAH, AND THEN ANNE KINDA PERSUADED ME...
ANNE?
TATTOO ARTIST! ANYHOW, I WAS THINKING... MAYBE...SOME *PIERCINGS?*






THANKS!

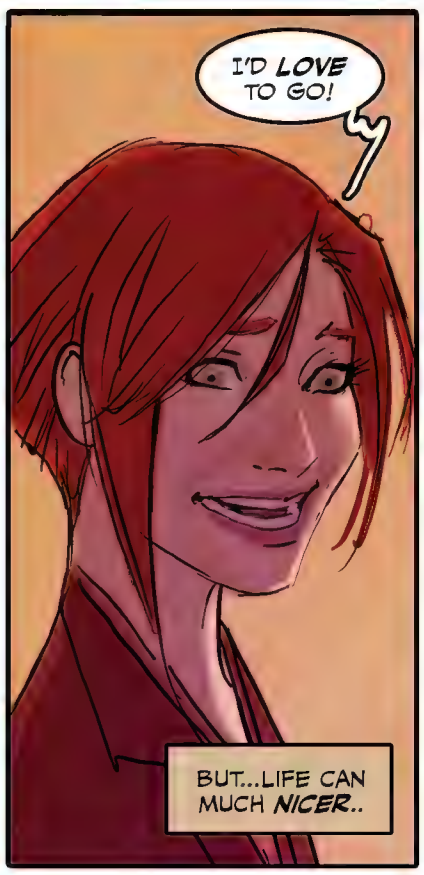
YOU'RE WELCOME!

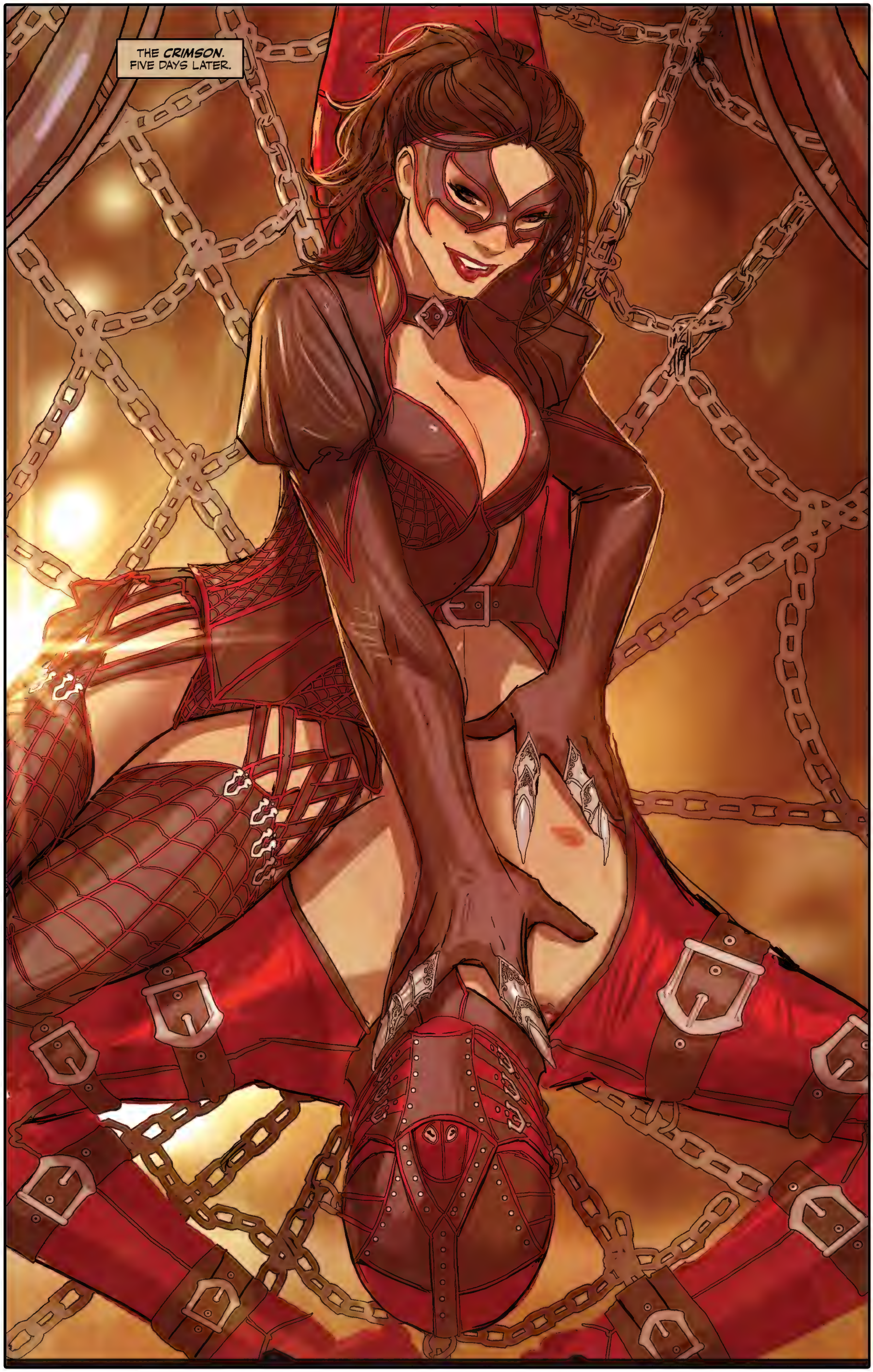
COME ON, YOUR PIZZA IS GETTING COLD.
SAY, LISA...

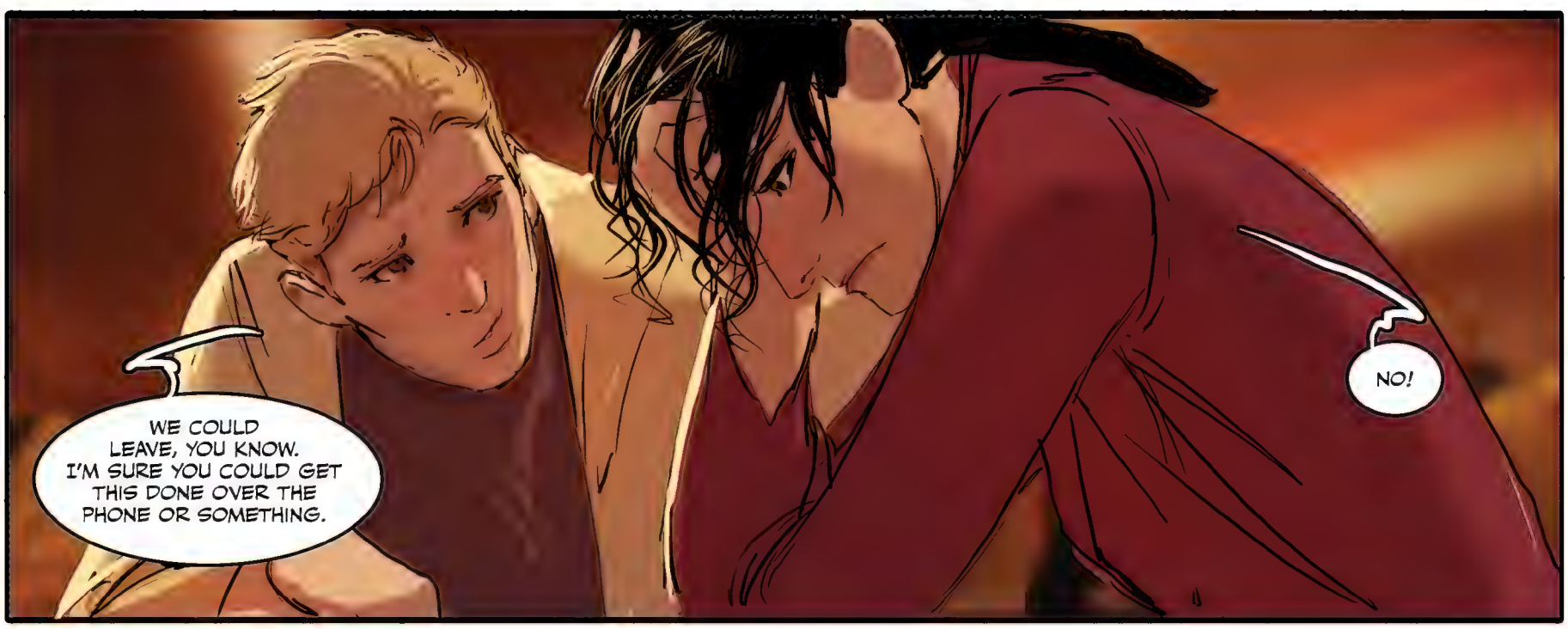
HUH?

UM...MAYBE IN TWO WEEKS...IF YOU WOULD WANT TO...THERE IS A PARTY AT THE CRIMSON...I GOT AN E-VITE FROM HARPER... SOO...

SURE...ESCAPISM IS *NICE* AND ALL...

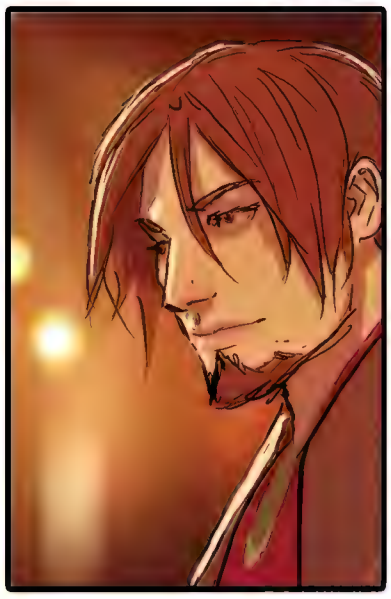

I'D *LOVE* TO GO!
BUT...LIFE CAN MUCH *NICER*..


THE CRIMSON.
FIVE DAYS LATER.

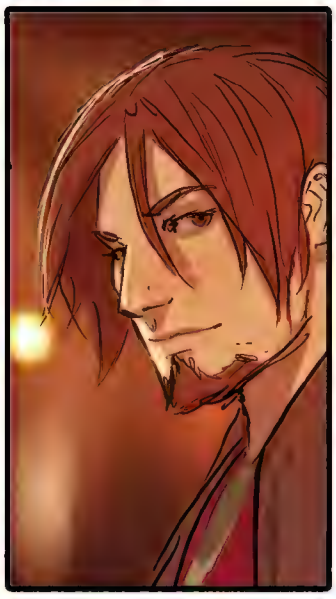

WE COULD LEAVE, YOU KNOW. I'M SURE YOU COULD GET THIS DONE OVER THE PHONE OR SOMETHING.
NO!

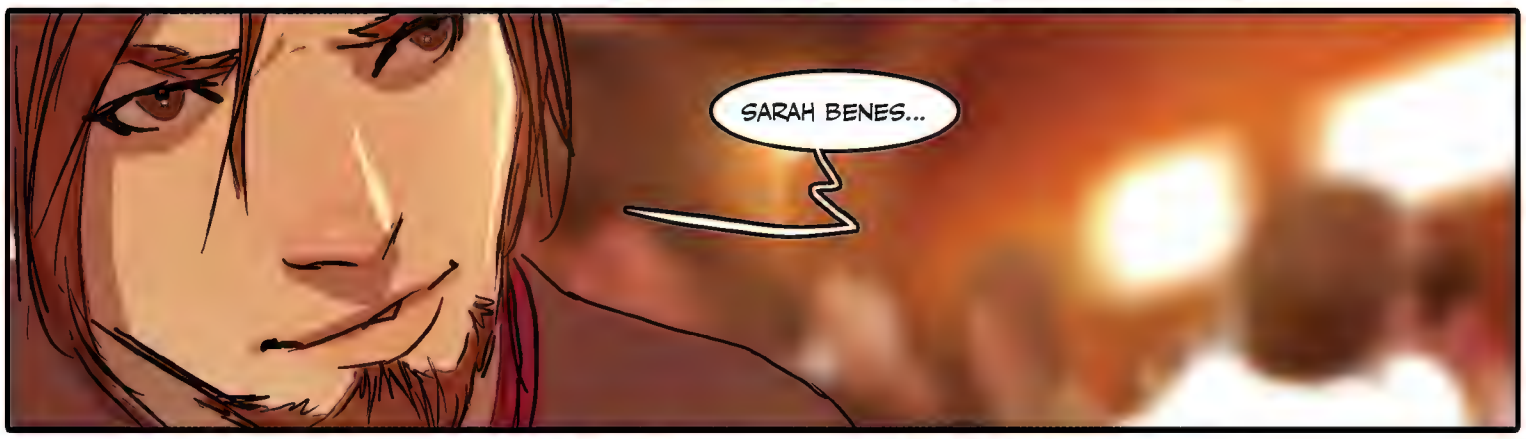
I CAN DO THIS...
YUP!
AAAALL IN A DAY'S WORK!
YOU THINK THIS GUY, HARPER, WOULD NOTICE IF I DID THE INTERVIEW DRUNK?
SARAH, I'VE SEEN YOU DRUNK... YOU ARE A MEAN DRUNK!
UGH...

IT'S JUST... I SWEAR, THE AIR IS THICK WITH CREEPINESS HERE.
MEH...I GUESS IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE.
OR LACK THER... HUH?

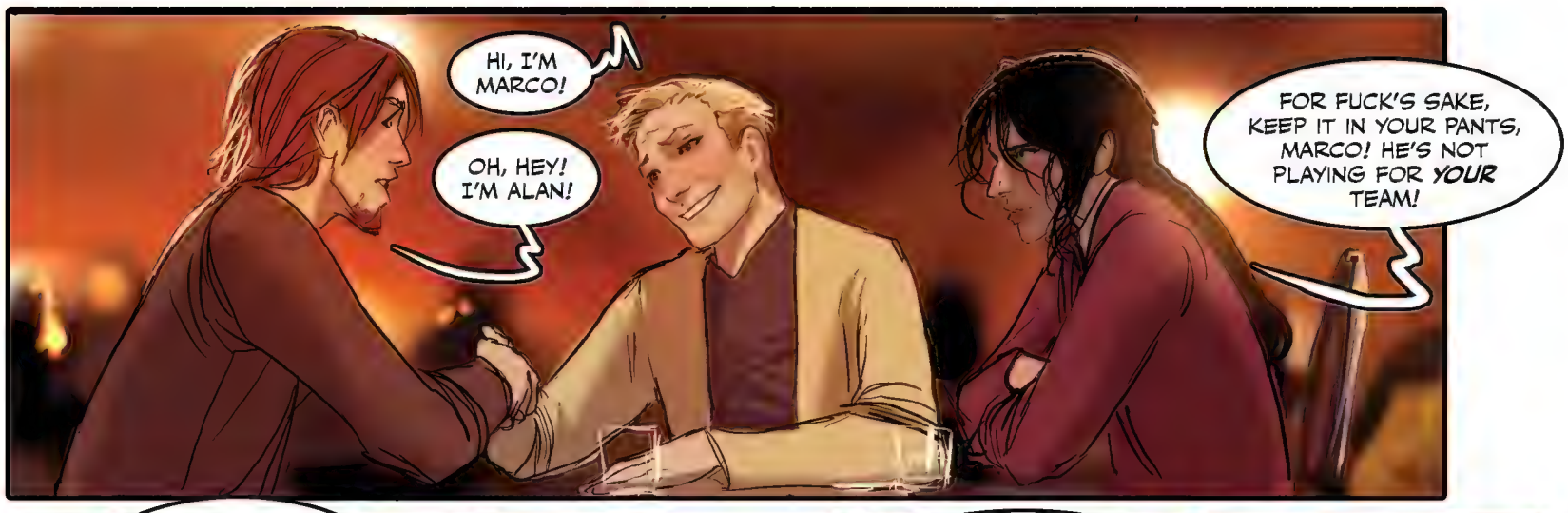


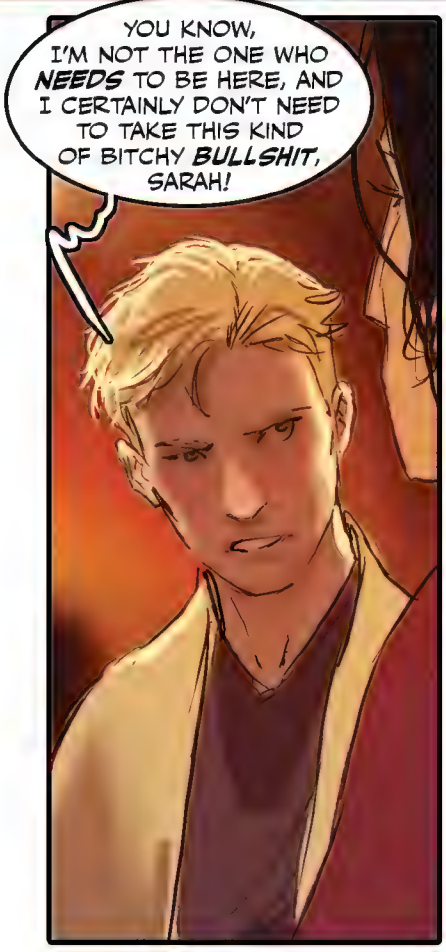
S/M BENSON?

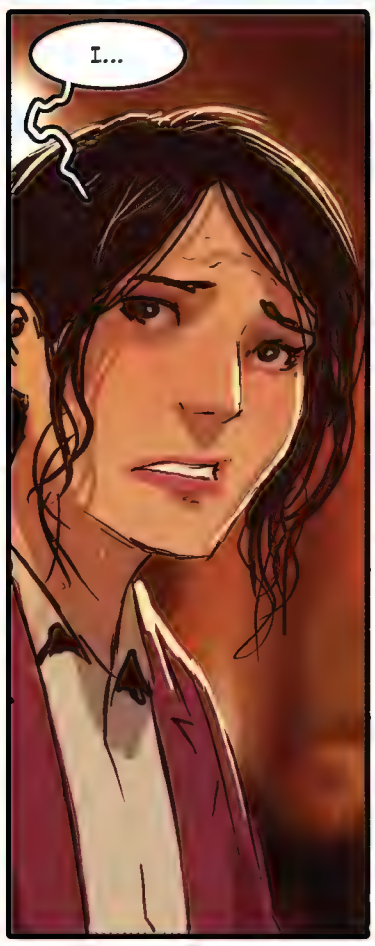



SARAH BENES...

ALAN BENSON...


HI, I'M MARCO!
OH, HEY! I'M ALAN!
FOR FUCK'S SAKE, KEEP IT IN YOUR PANTS, MARCO! HE'S NOT PLAYING FOR *YOUR* TEAM!


YOU KNOW, I'M NOT THE ONE WHO *NEEDS* TO BE HERE, AND I CERTAINLY DON'T NEED TO TAKE THIS KIND OF BITCHY *BULLSHIT*, SARAH!


I...

SHIT, MARCO... I'M SORRY, *HONESTLY*! I...I'M A LITTLE ON EDGE RIGHT NOW.
I GET THAT, BUT *CHILL* FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!
YEAH, I... I'LL TRY.

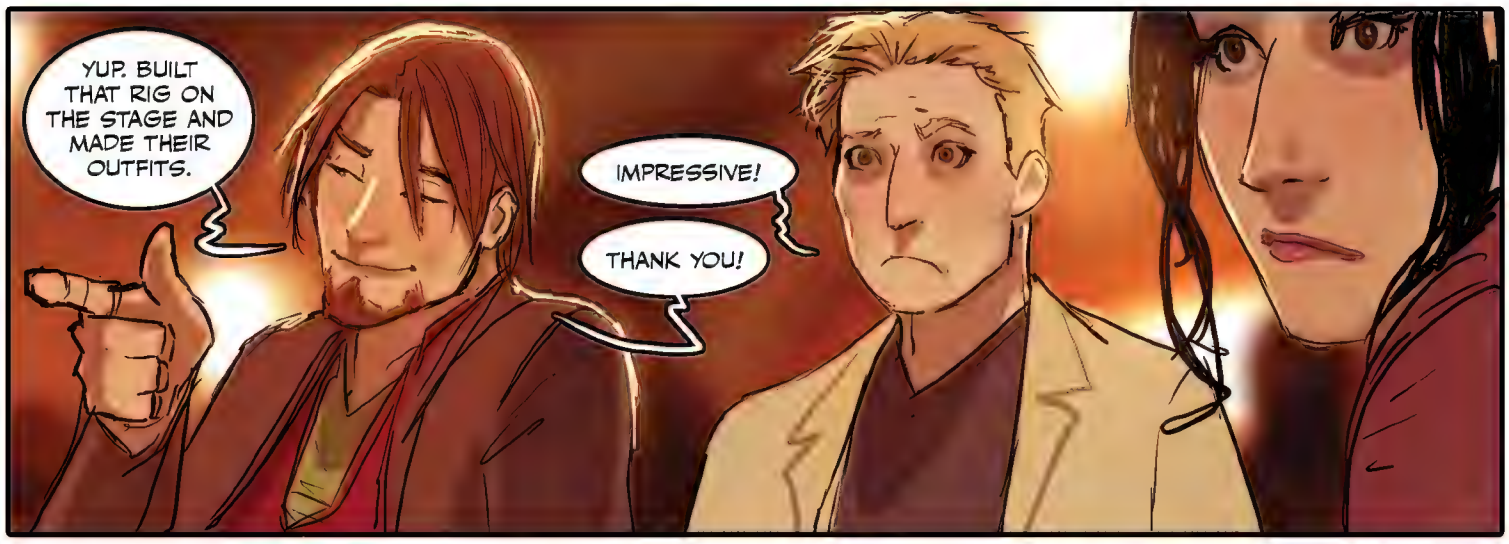
SO THE POINT I WAS TRYING TO GET ACROSS...POORLY... IS THAT MARCO HERE IS GAY AND YOU ARE NOT.

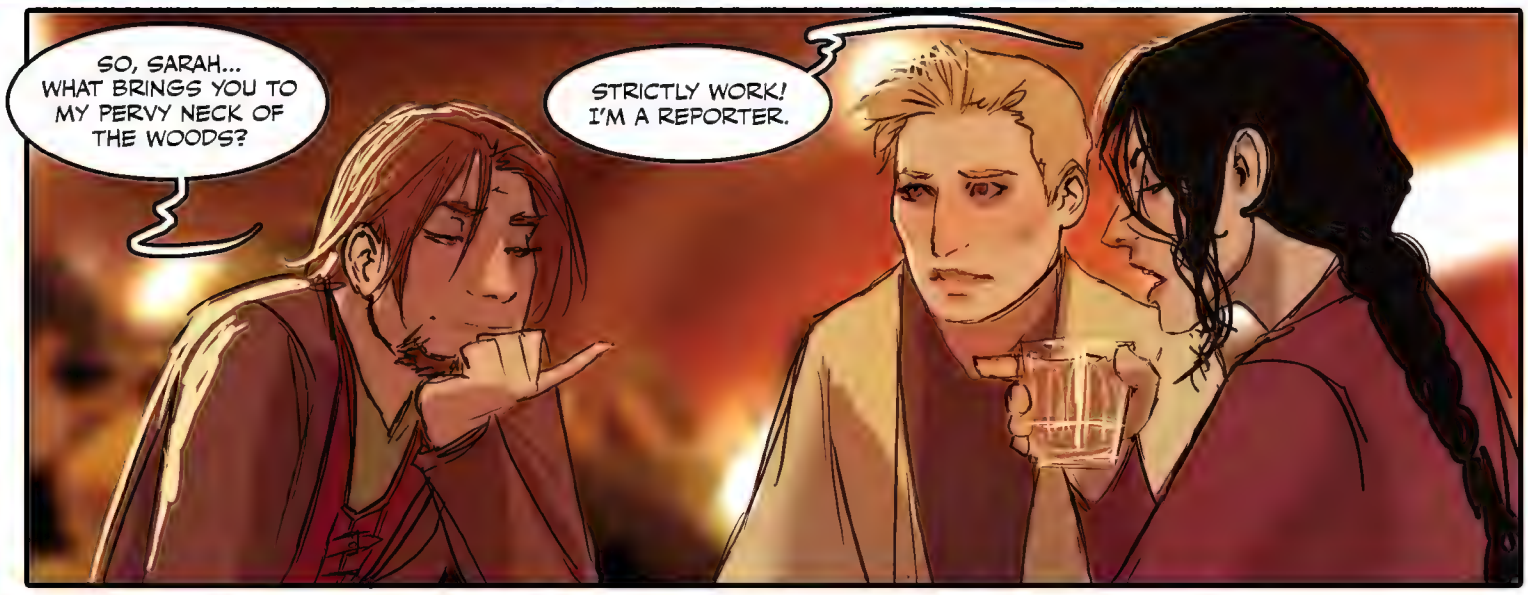
YOU WOULD KNOW THAT.
HEY, THAT WHOLE BUSINESS WITH YOUR SKETCHBOOK WAS NOT MY IDEA...
IT WAS JUST *GUYS* BEING ASSHOLES.

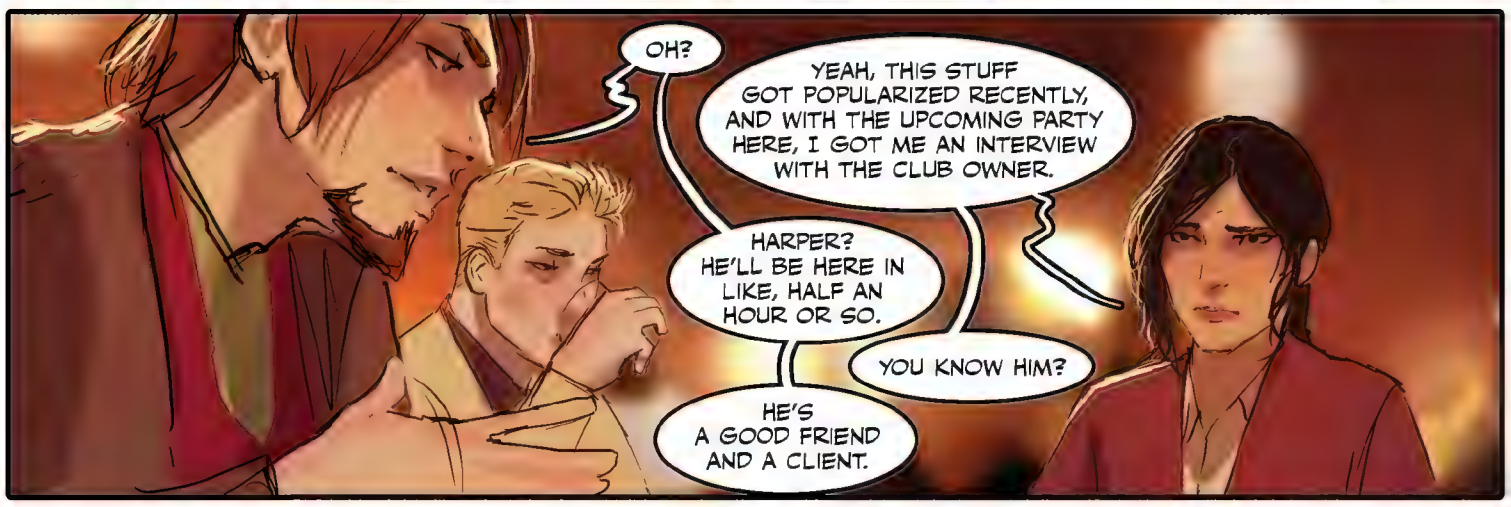
WHILE THE *GIRLS* CHEERED THEM ON, HUH?

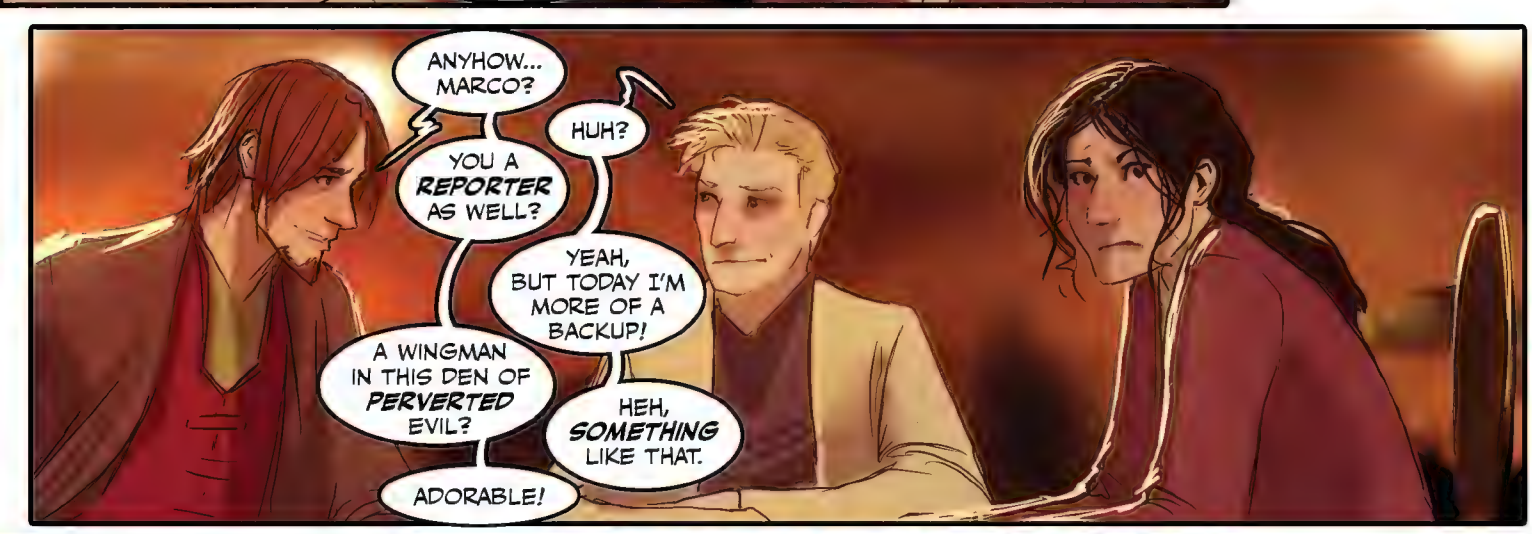
UM...WELL...

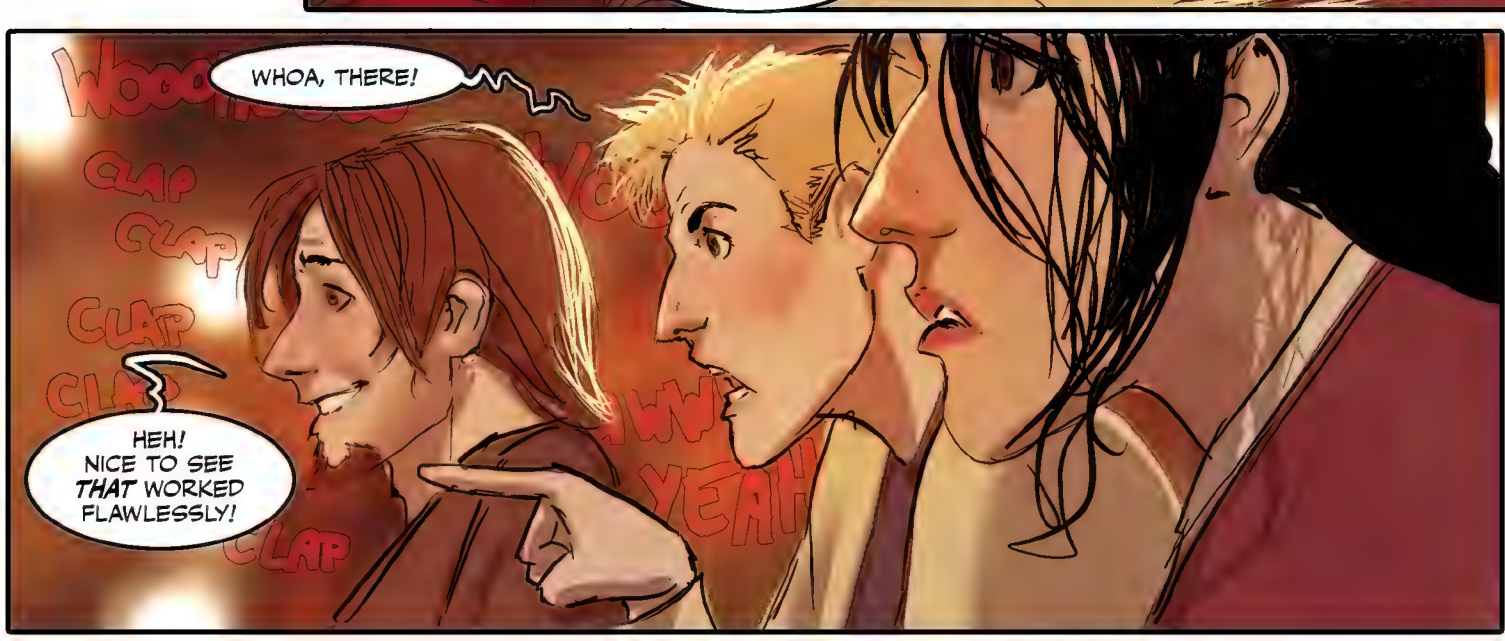
AHEM...SO, YOU'RE *STILL* INTO THIS... *STUFF?*

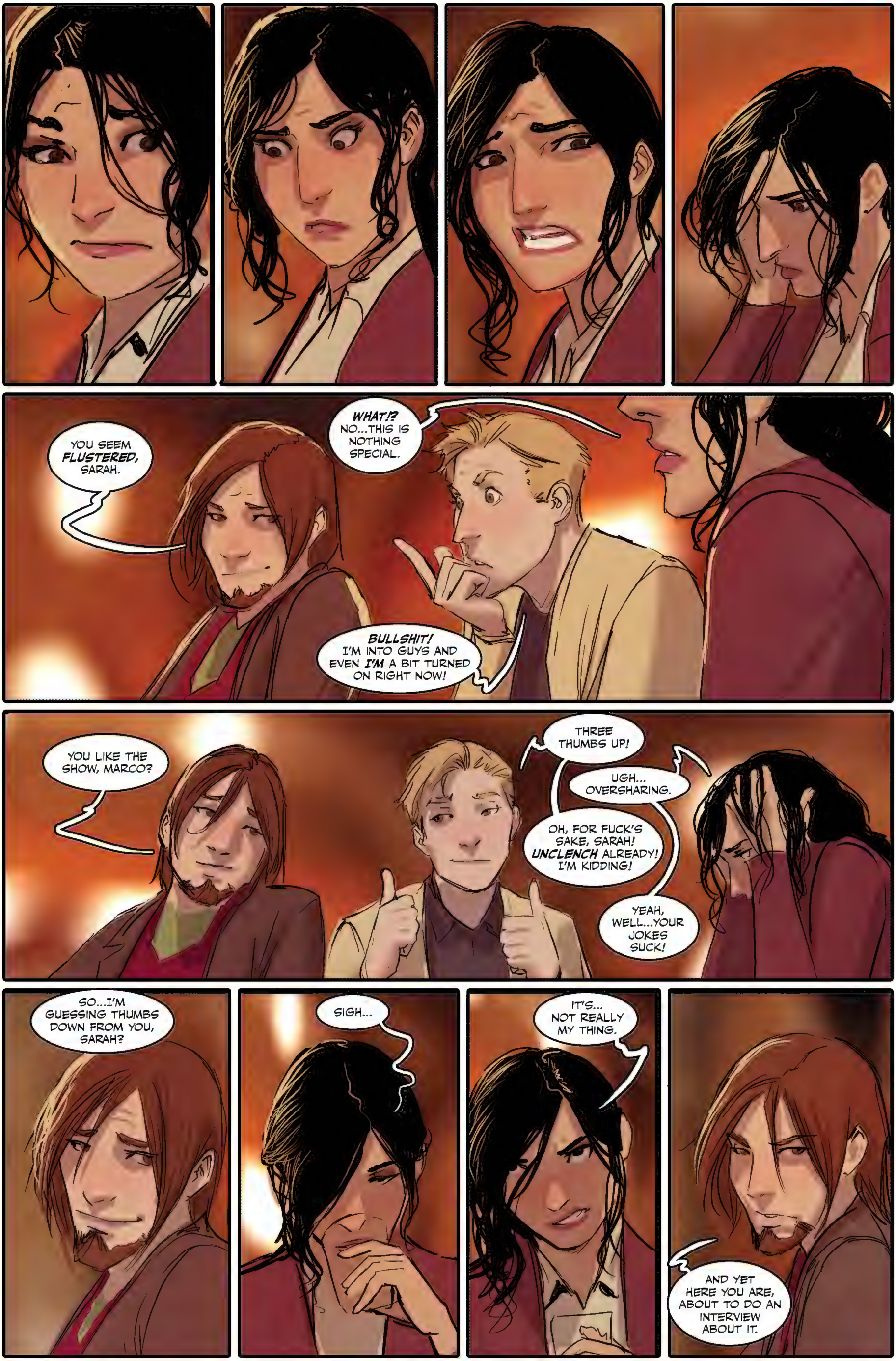

YUP. BUILT THAT RIG ON THE STAGE AND MADE THEIR OUTFITS.
IMPRESSIVE!
THANK YOU!

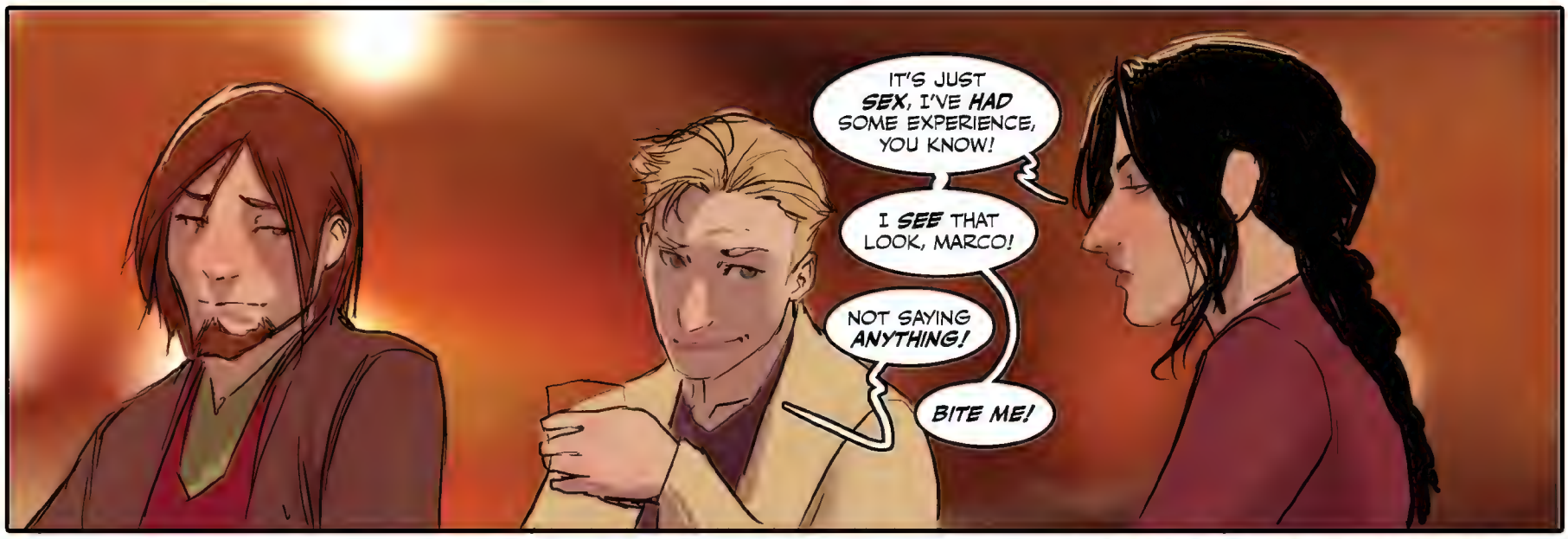

SO, SARAH... WHAT BRINGS YOU TO MY PERVY NECK OF THE WOODS?
STRICTLY WORK! I'M A REPORTER.

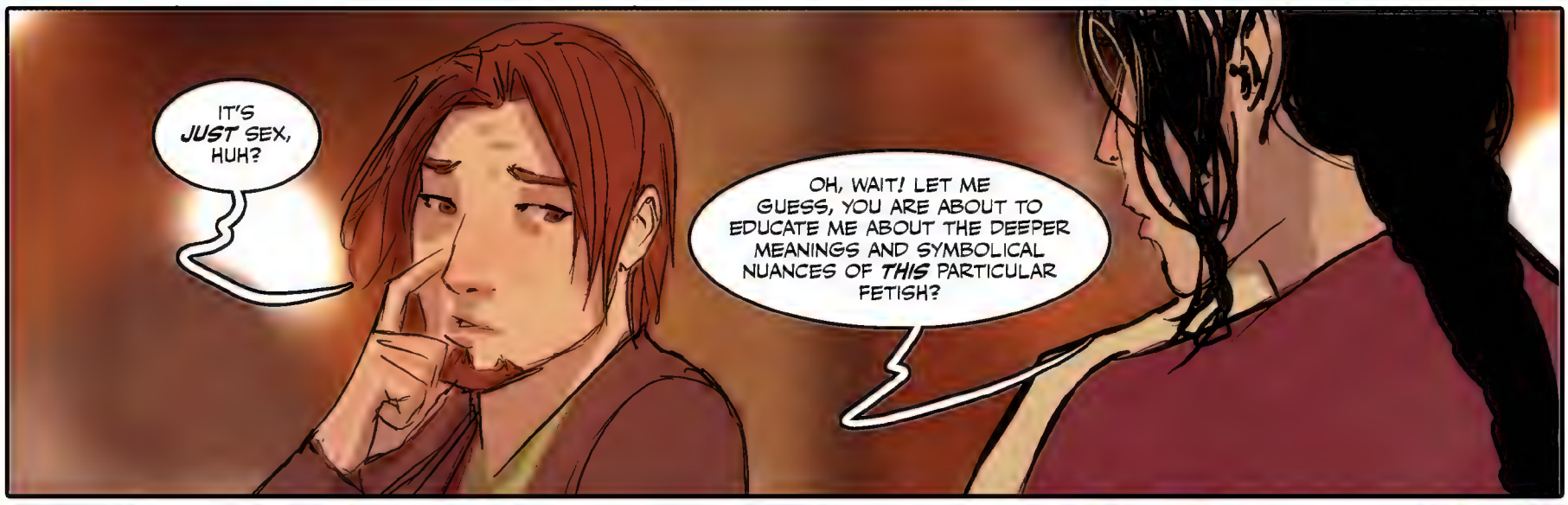

OH?
YEAH, THIS STUFF GOT POPULARIZED RECENTLY, AND WITH THE UPCOMING PARTY HERE, I GOT ME AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CLUB OWNER.
HARPER? HE'LL BE HERE IN LIKE, HALF AN HOUR OR SO.
YOU KNOW HIM?
HE'S A GOOD FRIEND AND A CLIENT.


ANYHOW... MARCO?
HUH?
YOU A REPORTER AS WELL?
YEAH, BUT TODAY I'M MORE OF A BACKUP!
A WINGMAN IN THIS DEN OF PERVERTED EVIL?
HEH, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
ADORABLE!

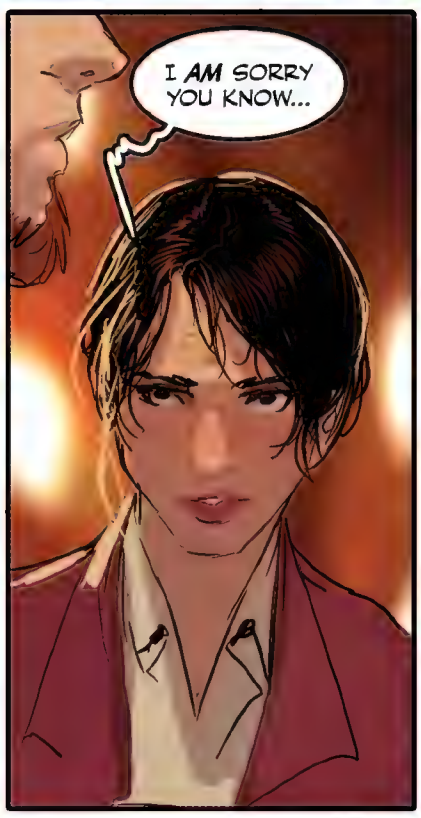

WHOA, THERE!
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
YEAH
HEH! NICE TO SEE THAT WORKED FLAWLESSLY!


YOU SEEM FLUSTERED, SARAH.
WHAT!? NO...THIS IS NOTHING SPECIAL.
BULLSHIT! I'M INTO GUYS AND EVEN I'M A BIT TURNED ON RIGHT NOW!
YOU LIKE THE SHOW, MARCO?
THREE THUMBS UP!
UGH... OVERSHARING.
OH, FOR FUCK'S SAKE, SARAH! UNCLENCH ALREADY! I'M KIDDING!
YEAH, WELL...YOUR JOKES SUCK!
SO...I'M GUESSING THUMBS DOWN FROM YOU, SARAH?
SIGH...
IT'S... NOT REALLY MY THING.
AND YET HERE YOU ARE, ABOUT TO DO AN INTERVIEW ABOUT IT.

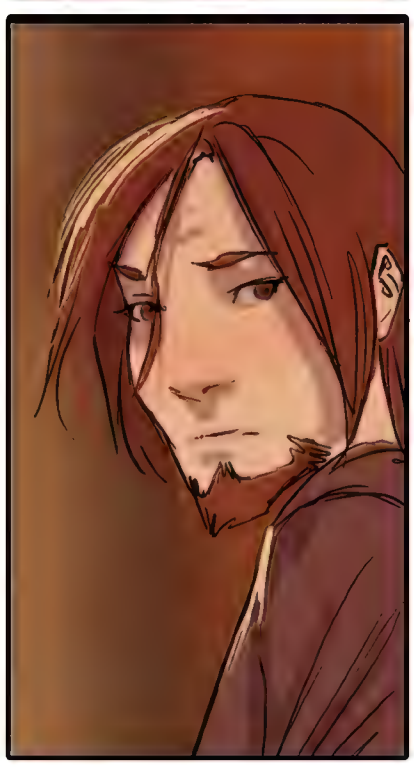

IT'S JUST SEX, I'VE HAD SOME EXPERIENCE, YOU KNOW!
I SEE THAT LOOK, MARCO!
NOT SAYING ANYTHING!
BITE ME!


IT'S JUST SEX, HUH?
OH, WAIT! LET ME GUESS, YOU ARE ABOUT TO EDUCATE ME ABOUT THE DEEPER MEANINGS AND SYMBOLICAL NUANCES OF THIS PARTICULAR FETISH?

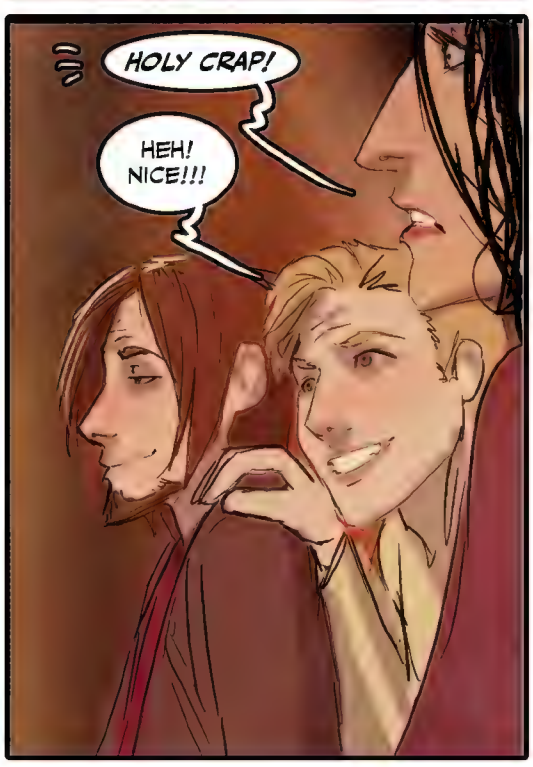
AND SPOIL HARPER'S FUN? HELL NO!


I AM SORRY YOU KNOW...

HUH? FOR?
FOR THE WHOLE COLLEGE THING... YOUR SKETCHBOOK...

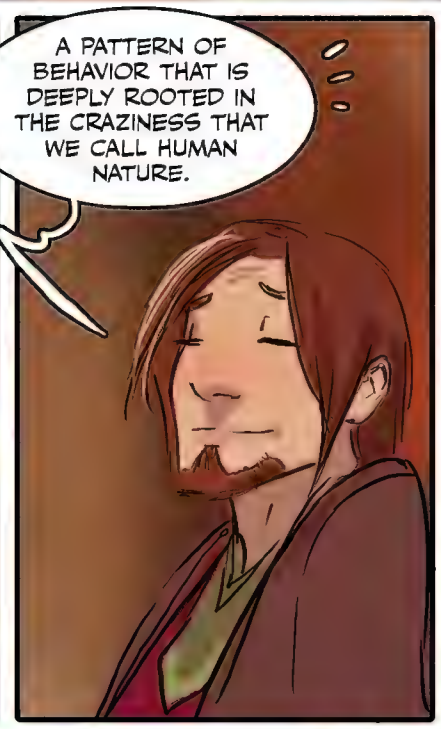


BYGONES...

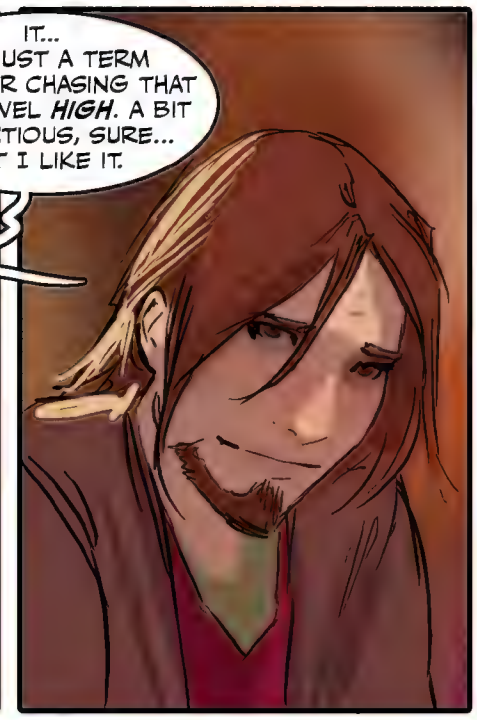

HOLY CRAP!
HEH! NICE!!!

OKAY, SERIOUSLY ALAN! JUSTIFY THAT!
THAT WAS COOL! COOL NEEDS NO JUSTIFICATION!
HAH! THAT IS THE CURVE FOR YOU!

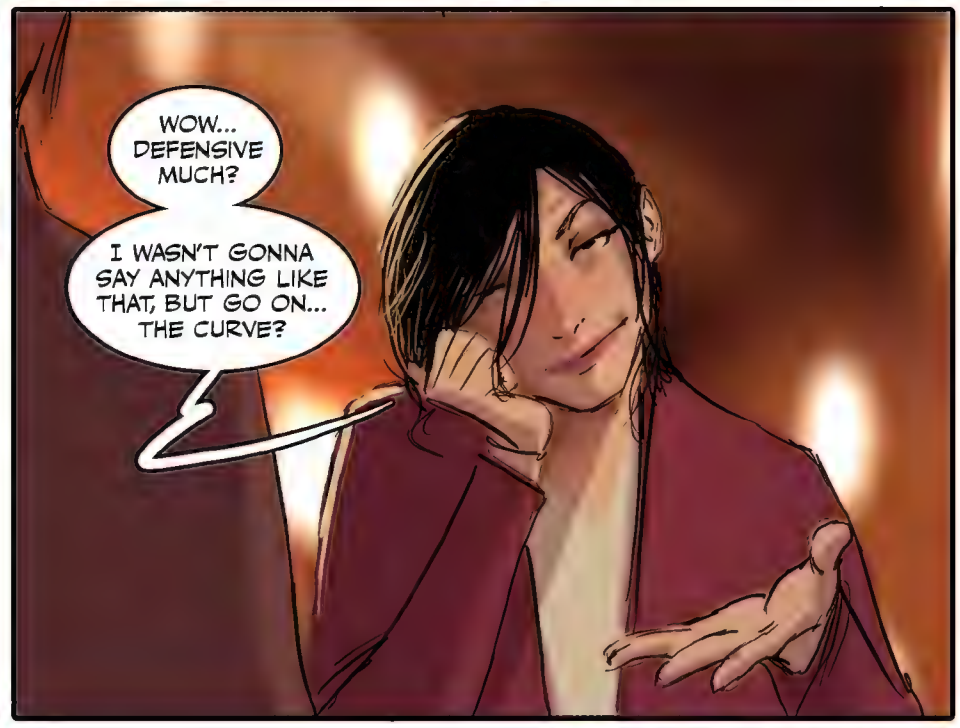
THE HELL IS THE "CURVE?"

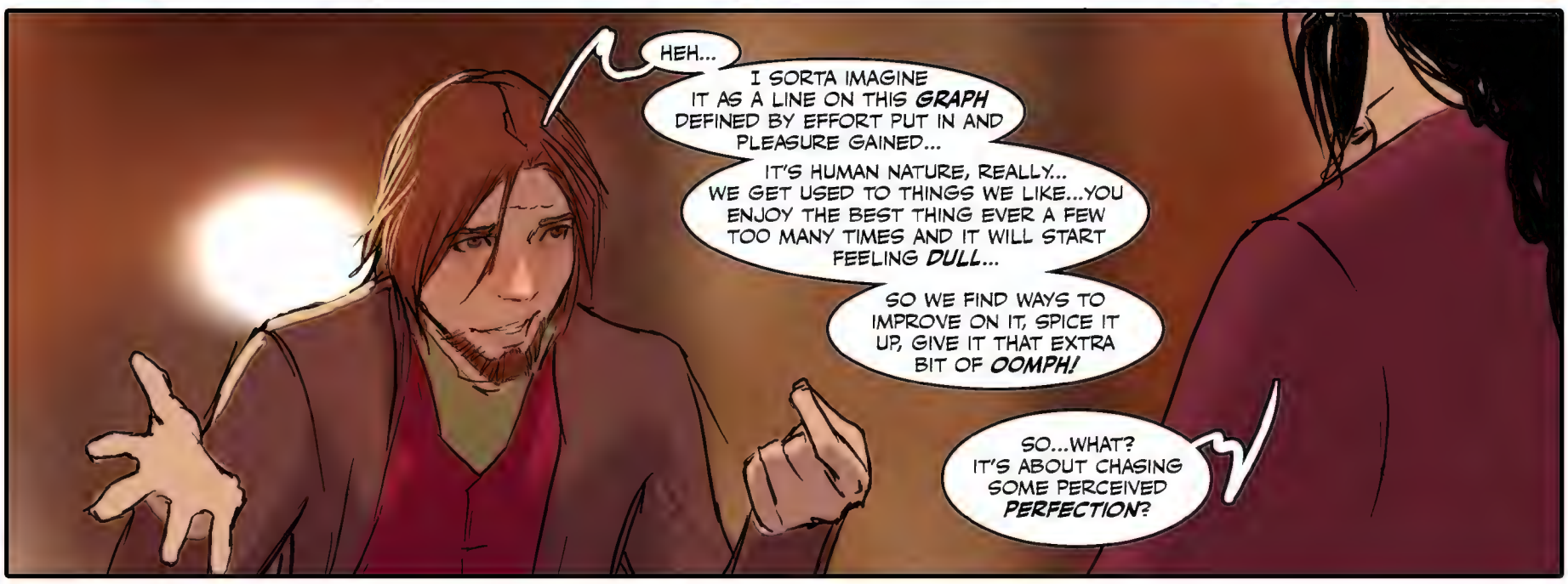

A PATTERN OF BEHAVIOR THAT IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE CRAZINESS THAT WE CALL HUMAN NATURE.

YEAH, NO! THAT TOTALLY HELPED!

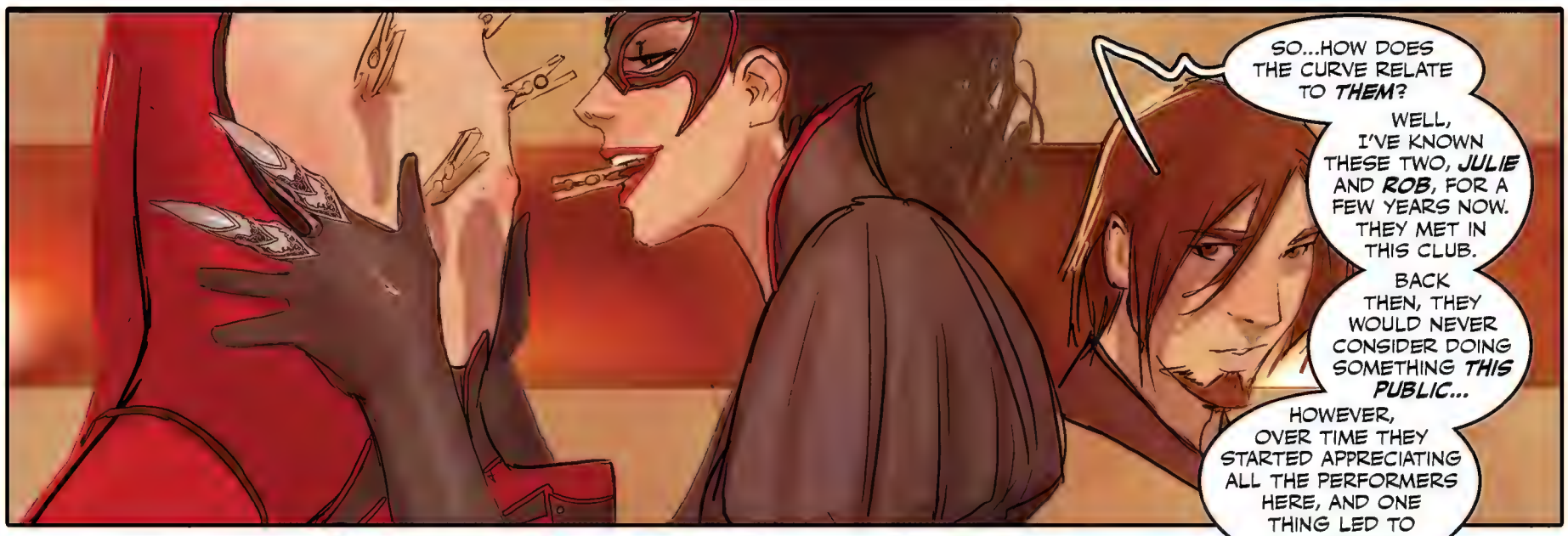

IT... IT'S JUST A TERM I USE FOR CHASING THAT NEXT-LEVEL HIGH. A BIT PRETENTIOUS, SURE... BUT I LIKE IT.

NEXT-LEVEL HIGH?
YEAH. THE WAY I SEE IT, THIS STUFF, SEX IN GENERAL...IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS, YOU KNOW...THINGS WE LIKE ENOUGH TO TRY TO IMPROVE.
AND BEFORE YOU SAY "SEX NEEDS NO IMPROVEMENT..." DOES FOOD? DOES THE CLOTHING WE WEAR, DOES ANYTHING WE LIKE?

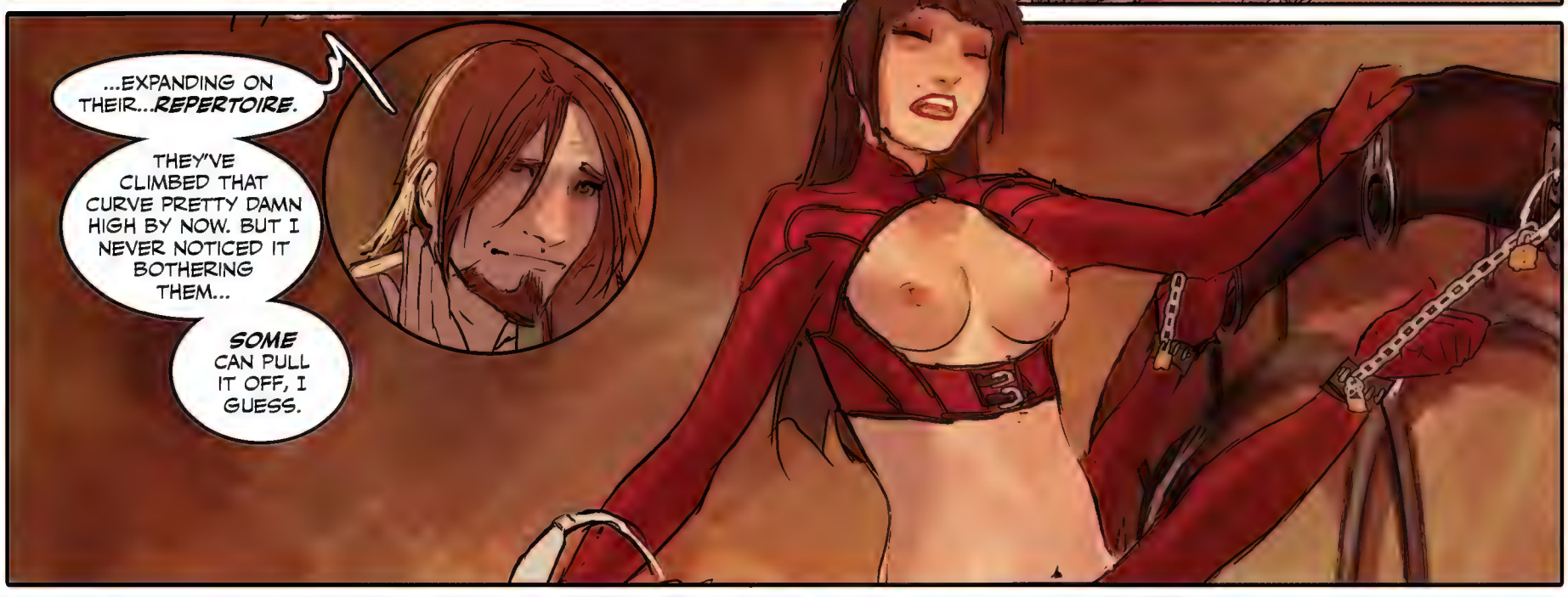

WOW... DEFENSIVE MUCH?
I WASN'T GONNA SAY ANYTHING LIKE THAT, BUT GO ON... THE CURVE?

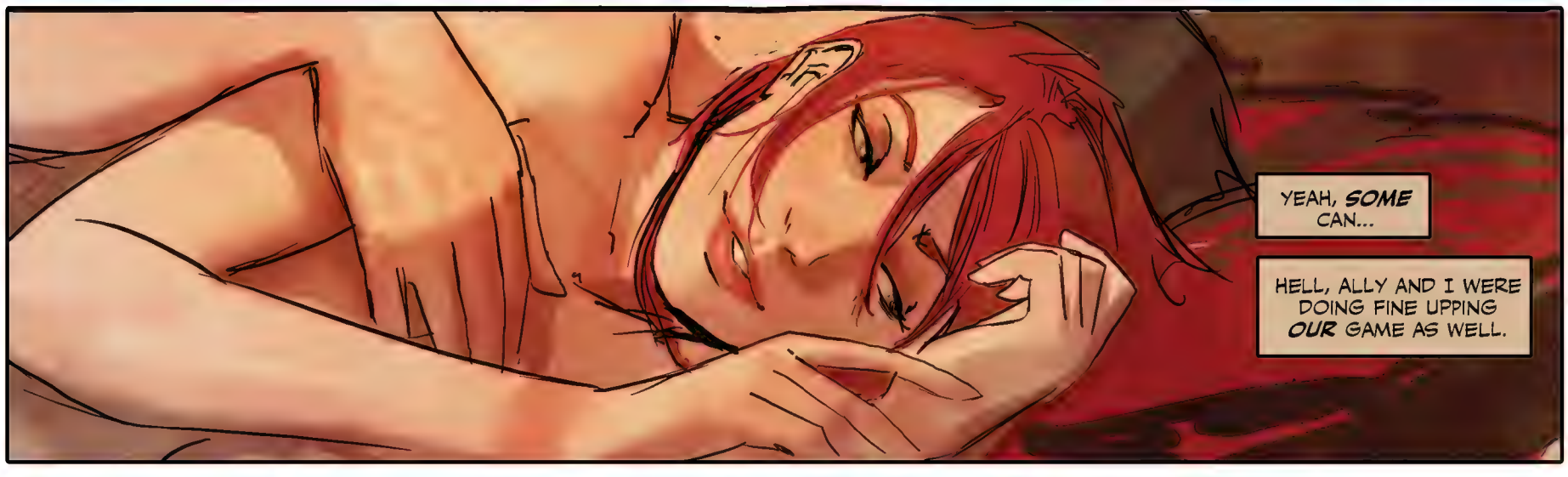

HEH...
I SORTA IMAGINE IT AS A LINE ON THIS GRAPH DEFINED BY EFFORT PUT IN AND PLEASURE GAINED...
IT'S HUMAN NATURE, REALLY... WE GET USED TO THINGS WE LIKE...YOU ENJOY THE BEST THING EVER A FEW TOO MANY TIMES AND IT WILL START FEELING DULL...
SO WE FIND WAYS TO IMPROVE ON IT, SPICE IT UP, GIVE IT THAT EXTRA BIT OF OOMPH!
SO...WHAT? IT'S ABOUT CHASING SOME PERCEIVED PERFECTION?

KINDA, YEAH. THEREIN LIES ITS BEAUTY AND DANGER. AS IS OFTEN THE CASE WITH PERFECTIONISM, AT SOME POINT *CLIMBING* THE CURVE CAN BECOME ITS OWN *PURPOSE,* Y'KNOW?
IT TURNS INTO AN *OBSESSION*...
MORE AND MORE EFFORT FOR EVER-DIMINISHING GAINS...
THEN...FRUSTRATION SETS IN...
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, HUH?
YUP.
WITH THAT GIRLFRIEND OF YOURS? ALLISON, WAS IT?
ALLY? NO, NOT SO MUCH.
I SEEM TO REMEMBER YOU TWO BEING QUITE INSEPARABLE BACK THEN...
SO ARE YOU *STILL* WITH HER?
HEH...NO, SHE IS... HMM...HONESTLY, I DON'T THINK EVEN SHE KNOWS HER RELATIONSHIP STATUS RIGHT NOW.
DO *YOU?*
NOT MY BUSINESS...THOUGH I COULD GUESS.
NO, I MEAN *YOUR* RELATIONSHIP STATUS?
HEY, SO, UM, YOU WERE SAYING HOW THIS CURVE RELATES TO *THOSE TWO?*
HUH?
OH...RIGHT.
KEEP IT IN *YOUR* PANTS!


SO...HOW DOES THE CURVE RELATE TO *THEM*?
WELL, I'VE KNOWN THESE TWO, *JULIE* AND *ROB*, FOR A FEW YEARS NOW. THEY MET IN THIS CLUB.
BACK THEN, THEY WOULD NEVER CONSIDER DOING SOMETHING *THIS PUBLIC*...
HOWEVER, OVER TIME THEY STARTED APPRECIATING ALL THE PERFORMERS HERE, AND ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER.

NOW, DON'T GET ME WRONG, THEY ARE BY NO MEANS *REPRESENTATIVE* OF OTHER BDSM PRACTITIONERS.
WE DON'T ALL AT SOME POINT GO: "*FUCKYEAH!* TIME TO GET FREAKY ON A STAGE!"
...BUT THE CURVE WORKS THE SAME WAY.
THEY TOO STARTED THINGS OFF SLOWLY ONCE...
GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER'S *LIKINGS* AND *LIMITS*...
BUT THEN, LIKE *MOST* PRACTITIONERS, THEY BEGAN *INTENSIFYING* THEIR GAME...

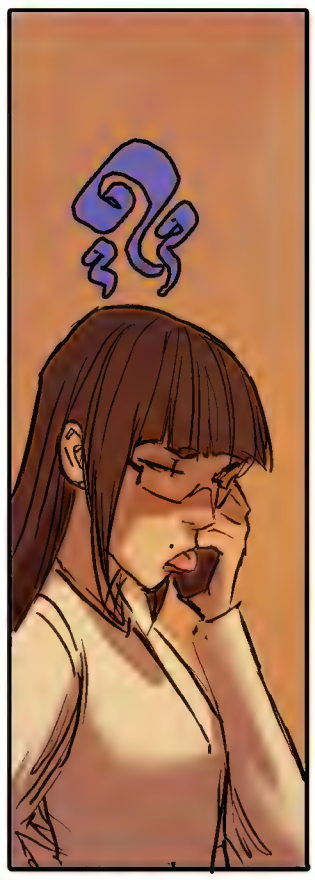

...EXPANDING ON THEIR...*REPERTOIRE*.
THEY'VE CLIMBED THAT CURVE PRETTY DAMN HIGH BY NOW. BUT I NEVER NOTICED IT BOTHERING THEM...
SOME CAN PULL IT OFF, I GUESS.


YEAH, *SOME* CAN...
HELL, ALLY AND I WERE DOING FINE UPPING *OUR* GAME AS WELL.

FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST.
YOU ROCK!
HEH, NOT TOO SHABBY, YOURSELF!
BUT, YEAH...

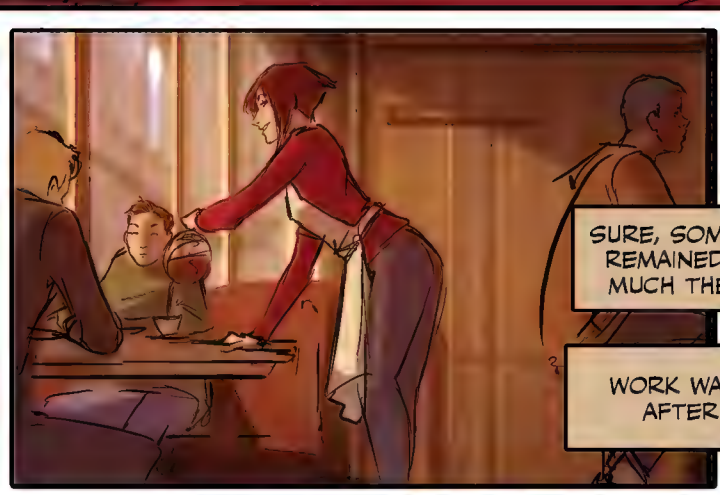
...I WON'T LIE THOSE WERE SOME *FUN* TIMES.
NO, MOM...
YEAH, WELL, I'M NOT!
ACTUALLY, A *FRIEND* HAS MOVED IN WITH ME...

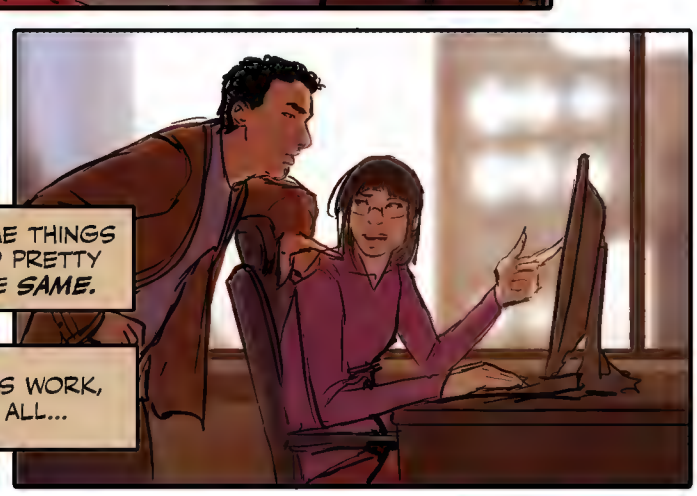
NO...
NO...
I KNOOOW...

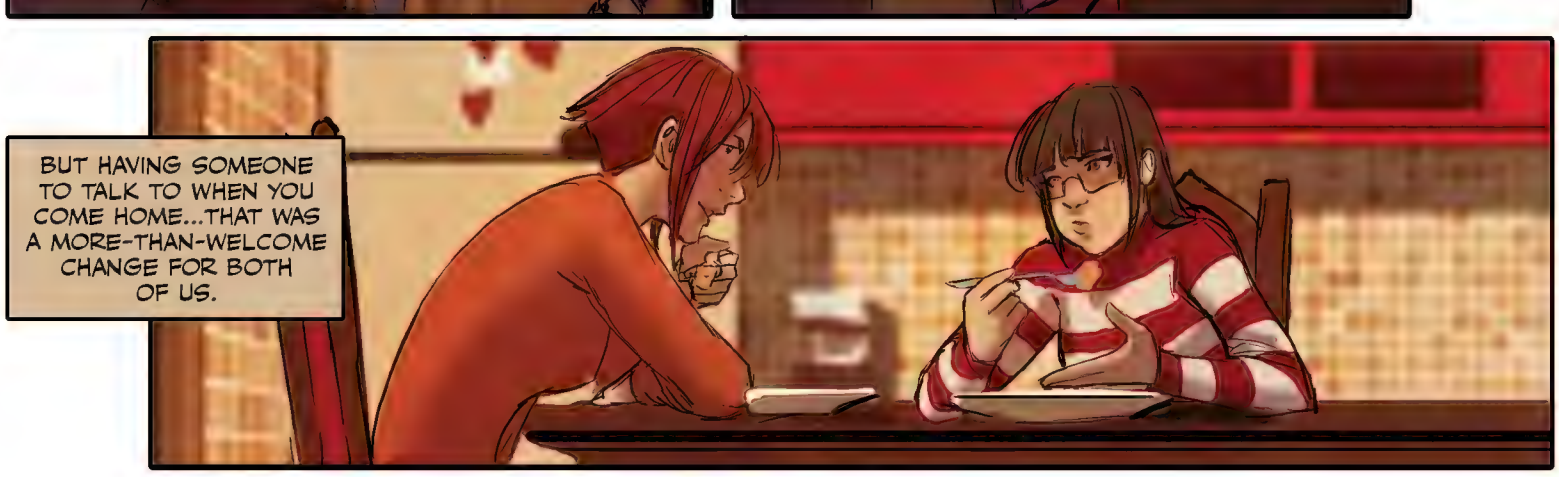


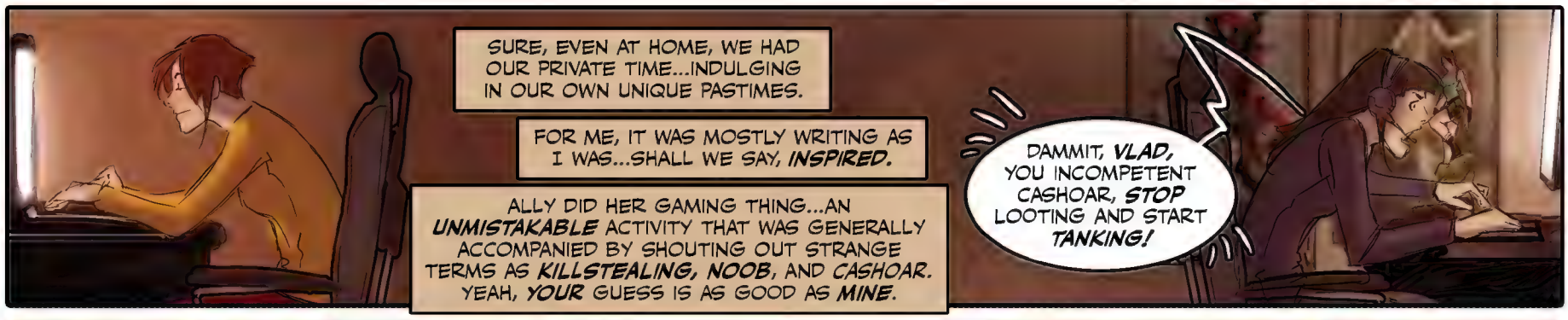
OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, MOM, SHE'S MY *FRIEND*! IT'S NOT LIKE I JUST INVITED SOME RANDOM *LUNATIC* INTO MY HOUSE!
YEAH, GOTTA GO NOW! *BYE!*

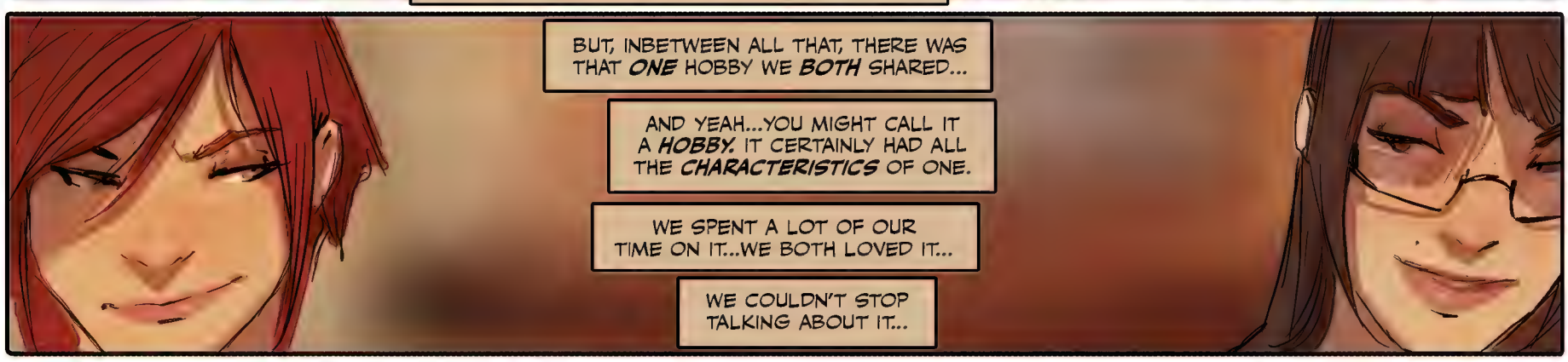
RANDOM *LUNATIC?*
SORRY 'BOUT THAT!
MOVING IN WITH ALLY CHANGED MY LIFE... IT CHANGED *BOTH* OUR LIVES.




SURE, SOME THINGS REMAINED PRETTY MUCH THE *SAME.*
WORK WAS WORK, AFTER ALL...


BUT HAVING SOMEONE TO TALK TO WHEN YOU COME HOME...THAT WAS A MORE-THAN-WELCOME CHANGE FOR BOTH OF US.

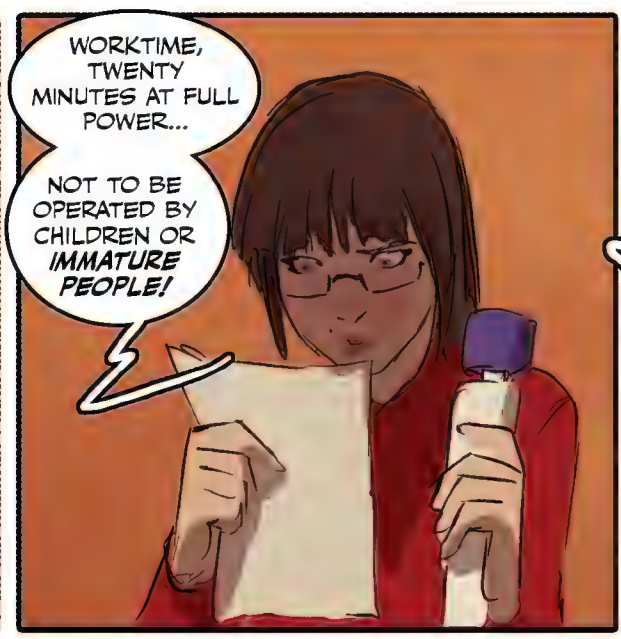

SURE, EVEN AT HOME, WE HAD OUR PRIVATE TIME...INDULGING IN OUR OWN UNIQUE PASTIMES.
FOR ME, IT WAS MOSTLY WRITING AS I WAS...SHALL WE SAY, INSPIRED.
ALLY DID HER GAMING THING...AN UNMISTAKABLE ACTIVITY THAT WAS GENERALLY ACCOMPANIED BY SHOUTING OUT STRANGE TERMS AS KILLSTEALING, NOOB, AND CASHOAR. YEAH, YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE.
DAMMIT, VLAD, YOU INCOMPETENT CASHOAR, STOP LOOTING AND START TANKING!


BUT, INBETWEEN ALL THAT, THERE WAS THAT ONE HOBBY WE BOTH SHARED...
AND YEAH...YOU MIGHT CALL IT A HOBBY. IT CERTAINLY HAD ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ONE.
WE SPENT A LOT OF OUR TIME ON IT...WE BOTH LOVED IT...
WE COULDN'T STOP TALKING ABOUT IT...

AND WE BURNED WAY TOO MUCH MONEY ON IT...
HEY, ALLY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS...

HONESTLY... WE WERE LIKE FRIGGIN' KIDS WITH TOYS.
HEY, LISA! ARE YOU MY MOM...
WAAAH!

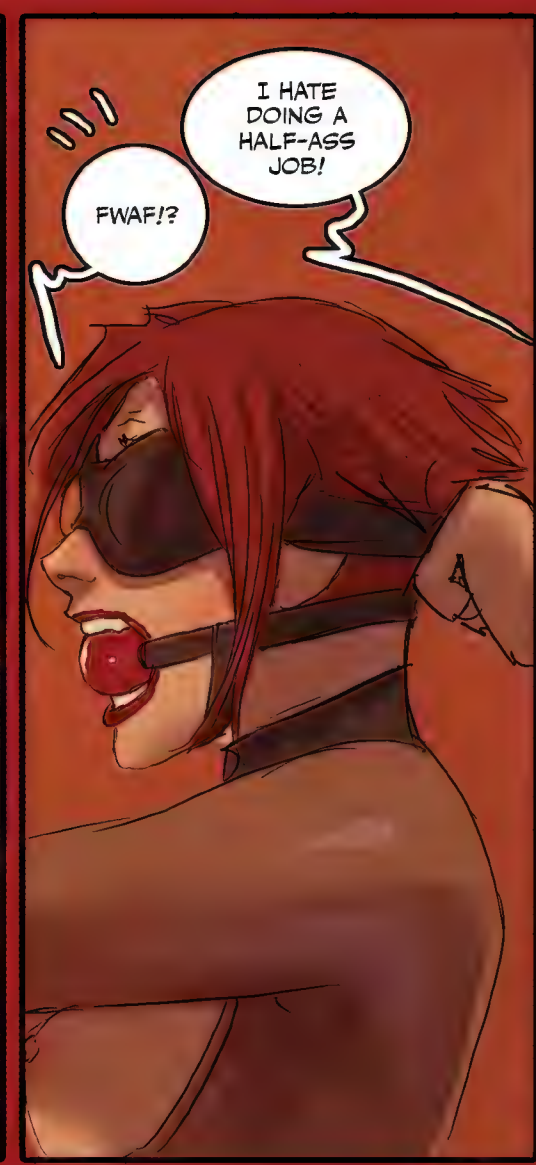
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE...
OK! HOLD BUTTON FOR TWO SECONDS TO TURN ON!


WORKTIME, TWENTY MINUTES AT FULL POWER...
NOT TO BE OPERATED BY CHILDREN OR IMMATURE PEOPLE!

WELL, I TAKE OFFENSE TO THAT!

AND, WELL...LIKE ANY HOBBY TAKEN SERIOUSLY, WE STARTED PLAYING OUR GAME MORE OFTEN.
AND MORE INTENSIVELY...
ALLY JUSTIFIED IT IN A...SHALL WE SAY, MATHEMATICAL WAY...
WITH UNSYNCHRONIZED PERIODS, AND MUTUAL RELUCTANCE TO...UM... RUN THE RED LIGHT...
WE HAD ROUGHLY TWO WEEKS OF PLAYTIME PER MONTH.
SO DAMN IT, WE WERE GONNA MAKE THE MOST OF THEM!
SO, I'LL BE BACK IN ABOUT FOUR HOURS.
SO DON'T GO WANDERING OFF ANYWHERE, OKAY?
AFFE FWAF!

OH, SILLY ME! I ALMOST FORGOT!


I HATE DOING A HALF-ASS JOB!
FWAF!?

LISA... DO YOU TRUST ME?

MMMM... WEF!
NOD
THEN KNOW THIS:
I WILL NOT BETRAY THAT TRUST!

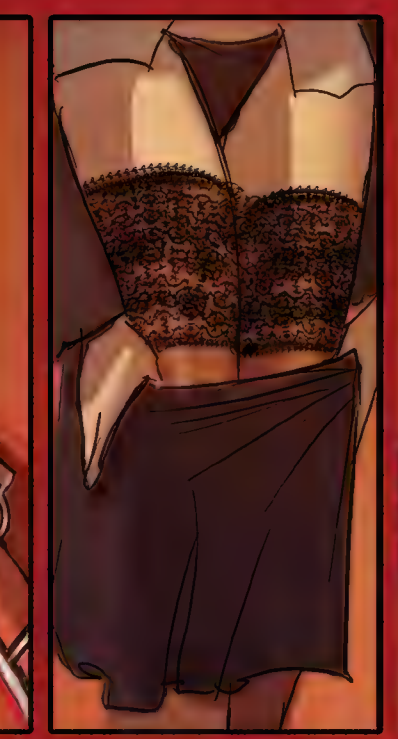
NOW LET'S GET THESE HANDS OF YOURS ALL NICE AND COZY.

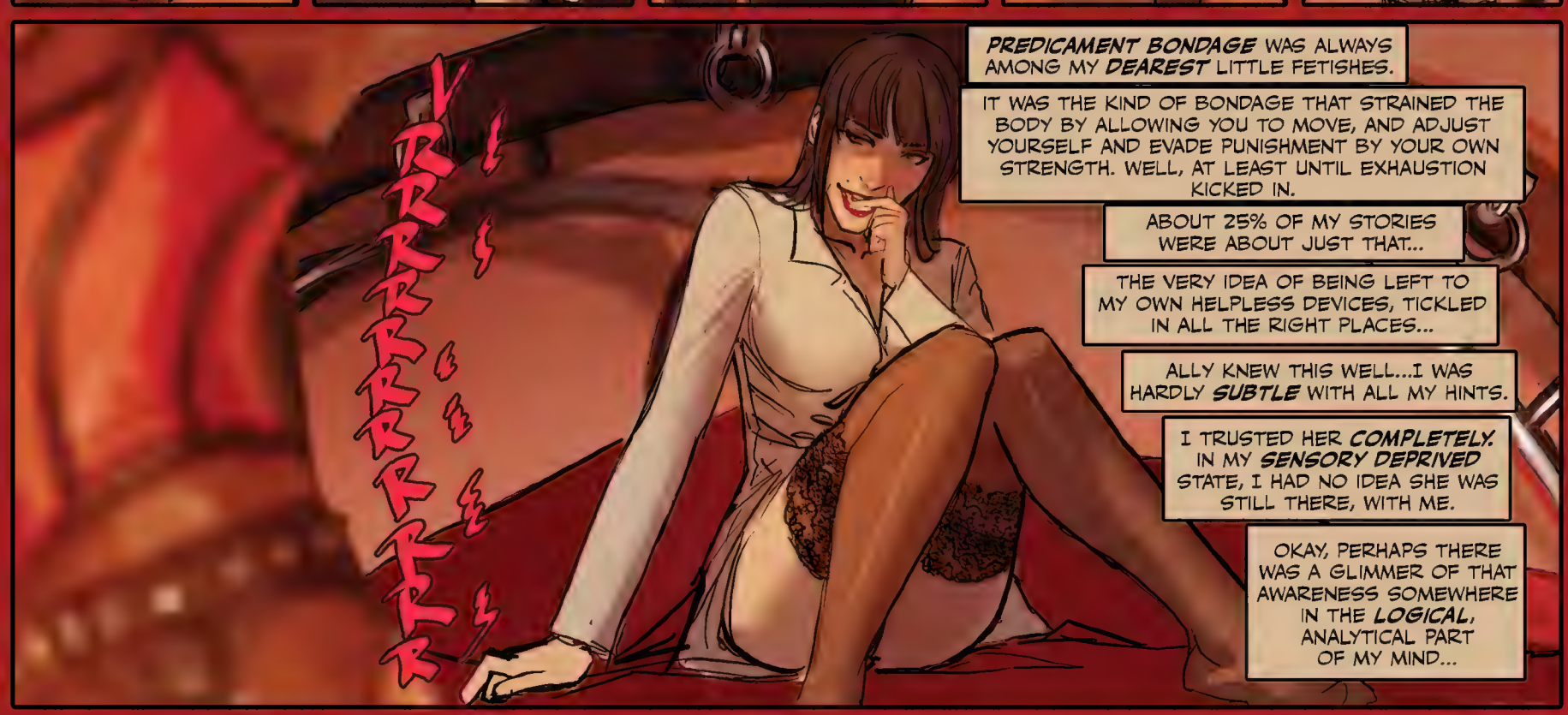
THERE WE GO...

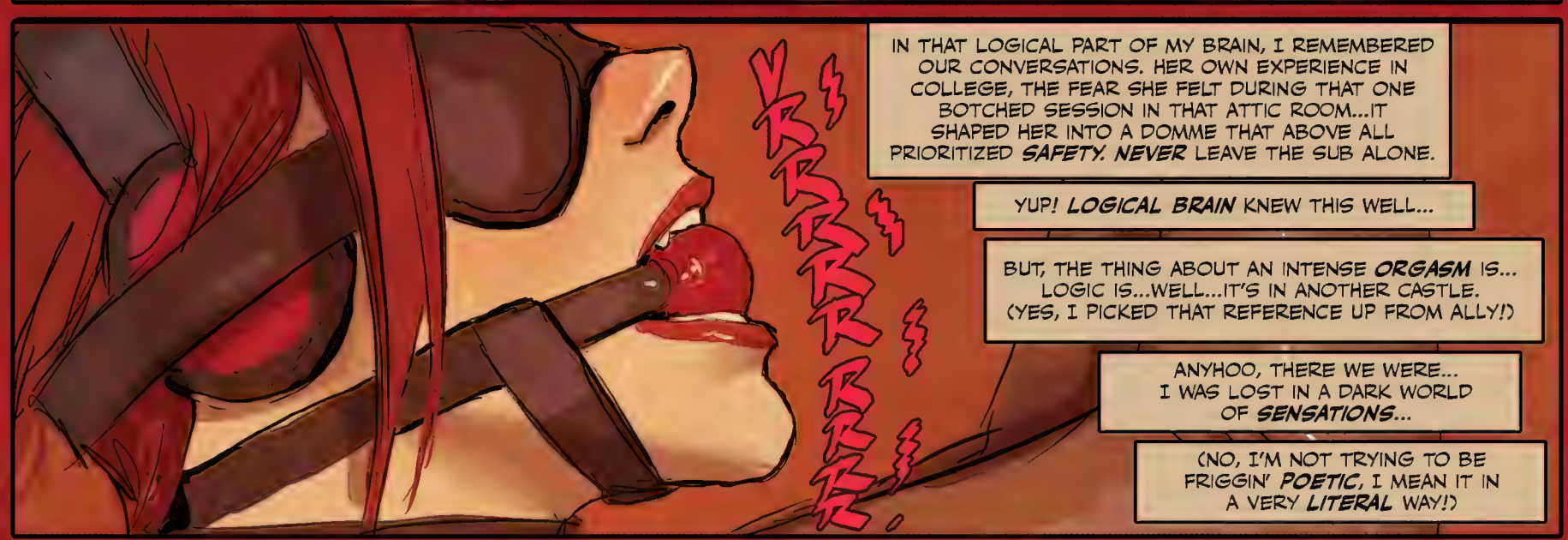
AND FINALLY, SOME NICE MUSIC TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED!
WAF!?

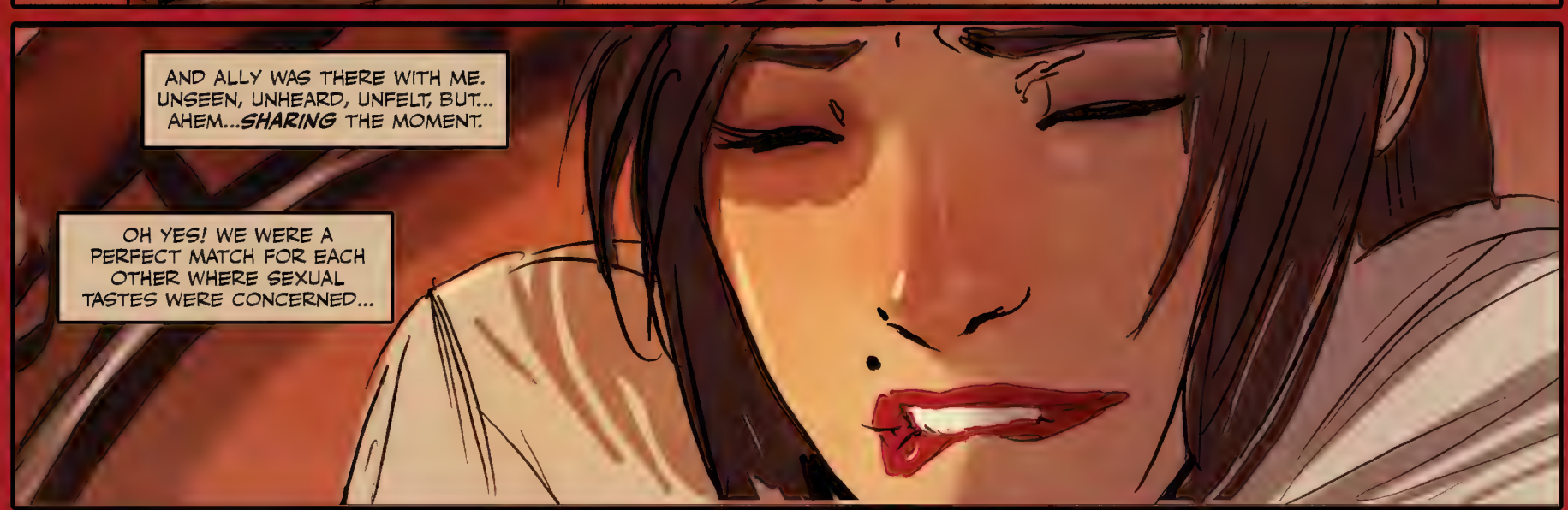
VRRRRR
ANNND WE TUCK THE PLAYER IN HERE...

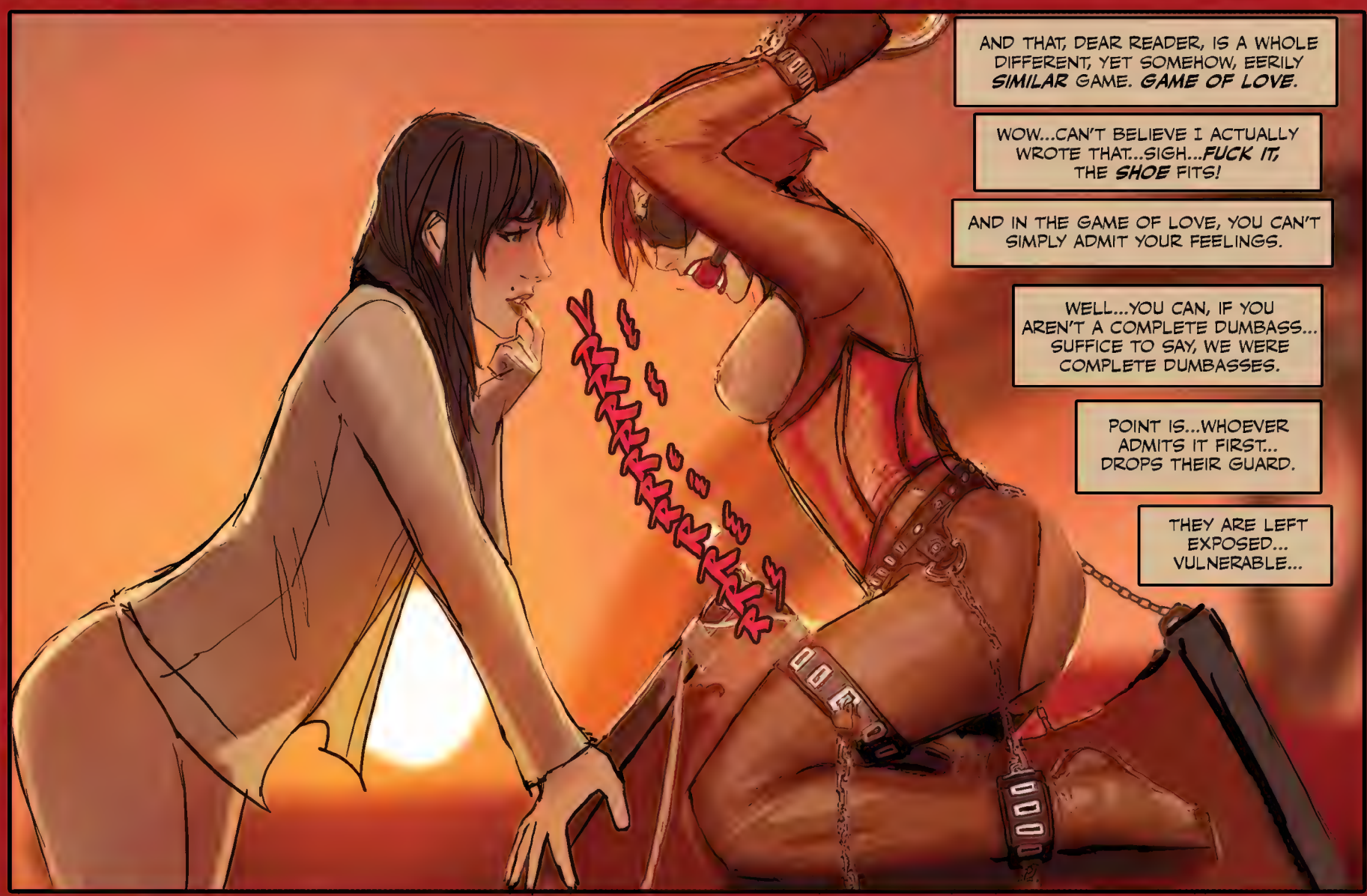
AND WE'RE DONE!

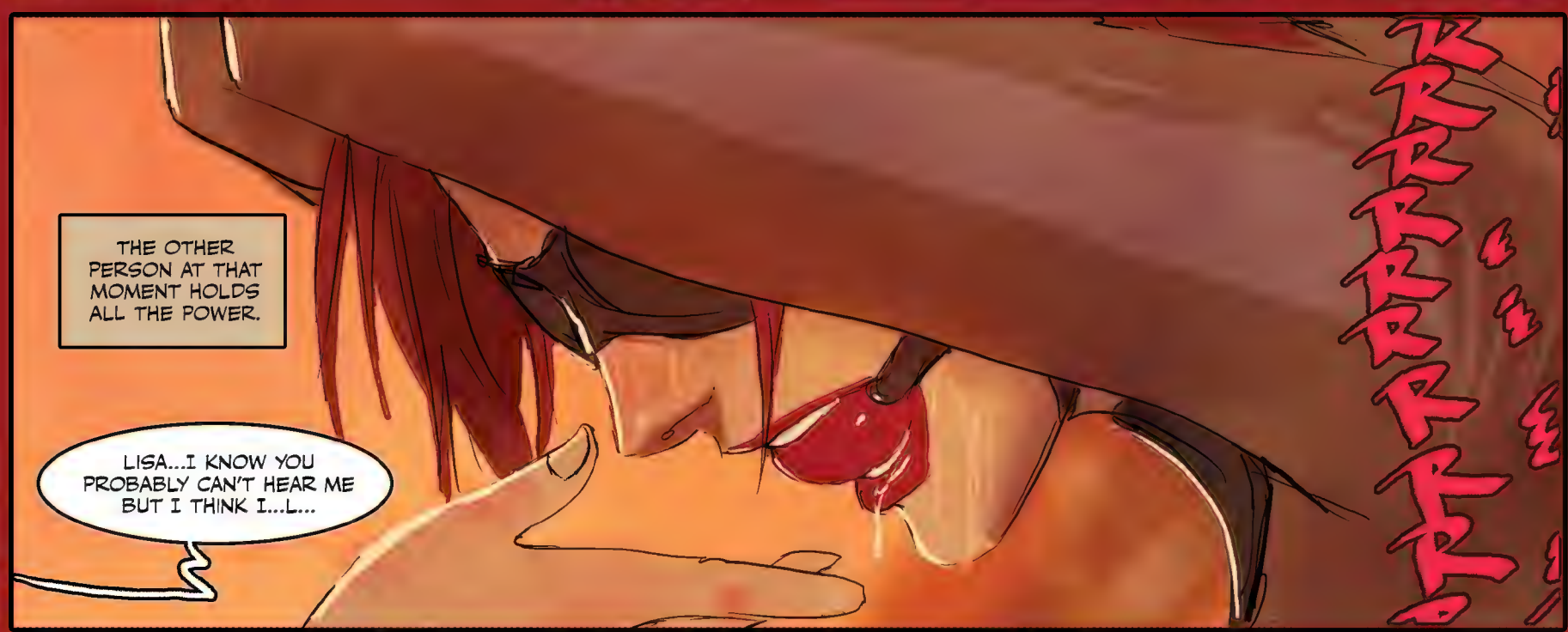



VRRRRRRRRR
PREDICAMENT BONDAGE WAS ALWAYS AMONG MY DEAREST LITTLE FETISHES.
IT WAS THE KIND OF BONDAGE THAT STRAINED THE BODY BY ALLOWING YOU TO MOVE, AND ADJUST YOURSELF AND EVADE PUNISHMENT BY YOUR OWN STRENGTH. WELL, AT LEAST UNTIL EXHAUSTION KICKED IN.
ABOUT 25% OF MY STORIES WERE ABOUT JUST THAT...
THE VERY IDEA OF BEING LEFT TO MY OWN HELPLESS DEVICES, TICKLED IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES...
ALLY KNEW THIS WELL...I WAS HARDLY SUBTLE WITH ALL MY HINTS.
I TRUSTED HER COMPLETELY. IN MY SENSORY DEPRIVED STATE, I HAD NO IDEA SHE WAS STILL THERE, WITH ME.
OKAY, PERHAPS THERE WAS A GLIMMER OF THAT AWARENESS SOMEWHERE IN THE LOGICAL, ANALYTICAL PART OF MY MIND...


VRRRRRRRRR
IN THAT LOGICAL PART OF MY BRAIN, I REMEMBERED OUR CONVERSATIONS. HER OWN EXPERIENCE IN COLLEGE, THE FEAR SHE FELT DURING THAT ONE BOTCHED SESSION IN THAT ATTIC ROOM...IT SHAPED HER INTO A DOMME THAT ABOVE ALL PRIORITIZED SAFETY. NEVER LEAVE THE SUB ALONE.
YUP! LOGICAL BRAIN KNEW THIS WELL...
BUT, THE THING ABOUT AN INTENSE ORGASM IS... LOGIC IS...WELL...IT'S IN ANOTHER CASTLE. (YES, I PICKED THAT REFERENCE UP FROM ALLY!)
ANYHOO, THERE WE WERE... I WAS LOST IN A DARK WORLD OF SENSATIONS...
(NO, I'M NOT TRYING TO BE FRIGGIN' POETIC, I MEAN IT IN A VERY LITERAL WAY!)


AND ALLY WAS THERE WITH ME. UNSEEN, UNHEARD, UNFELT, BUT... AHEM...SHARING THE MOMENT.
OH YES! WE WERE A PERFECT MATCH FOR EACH OTHER WHERE SEXUAL TASTES WERE CONCERNED...





I WILL AT THIS POINT SPARE YOU MY GAGGED SHRIEK, RESULTING FROM ABOUT HALF AN HOUR OF SENSORY DEPRIVATION INTERRUPTED BY A SINGLE TOUCH...

I WILL ALSO SPARE YOU A LENGTHY SESSION OF CUSSING ALLY OUT...

NOT FOR LEAVING ME. THAT WAS ONE OF MY FAVORITE FANTASIES FINALLY REALIZED...

BUT DAMN, SHE ALMOST GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK!

BUT YEAH, I LOVE YOU! SIMPLE, RIGHT?
AND YET WE WERE BOTH TERRIFIED OF SPEAKING THOSE WORDS.
I SAID IT BEFORE... WE CLINGED TO OUR "GOOD ENOUGH."
CHANGING THE "GOOD ENOUGH" TO A "WHAT IF," TAKES COURAGE...
PROBLEM WAS...OUR "GOOD ENOUGH" WAS TOO GOOD...
IN FACT, OUR "GOOD ENOUGH" WAS FUCKING INCREDIBLE!
WE TURNED OUR LONG-CHERISHED SEXUAL FANTASIES INTO REALITY.
THIS LITTLE "FRIENDS BOINKING" THING WORKED ON PAPER...OR...IN THIS CASE CHALKBOARD...
SERIOUSLY: HOT IDEA, CRAPPY AFTERTASTE!
WE BOTH AVOIDED DEALING WITH THE EMOTIONAL GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM...
OH, WE HAD OUR REASONS!
STUPID, ASS-BACKWARDS, UPSIDE-DOWN REASONS...
THEY WERE THE KIND OF REASONS THAT ONLY MADE SENSE TO AN INSECURE MIND.
AND, BOY, DID OUR MINDS QUALIFY.
IT WAS ALL KINDS OF MENTAL BULLSHIT.
FROM ALLY'S STANDPOINT, WE WERE FRIENDS. I CAME TO HER LOOKING FOR A DOMME...WHAT WOULD I THINK OF HER IF SHE WERE TO JUST, ALL OF SUDDEN, SHOW SUCH A VULNERABLE SIDE TO ME? LORD KNOWS, SHE HATED HERSELF ENOUGH FOR HER CLUB MELTDOWN AS IT WAS. (HER WORDS, NOT MINE.)
EVEN WORSE, SHE WONDERED IF I WOULD FEEL PRESSURED BY IT. AFTER ALL, SHE WAS MY DOMME, AND I LIVED UNDER HER ROOF...IN A WAY, SHE FELT LIKE SHE HELD AN UNFAIR PSYCHOLOGICAL LEVERAGE OVER ME...
SO, YEAH...APPARENTLY, A BADASS CORSET AND A WHIP MAY HAVE GIVEN HER A SENSE OF POWER....BUT THEY DIDN'T DO SHIT AGAINST HER EMOTIONAL INSECURITY.
BUT I WAS NO BETTER...
I FELT LIKE I WAS CROSSING THE LINE BY FALLING FOR HER...
AS A SUB, I WAS SUPPOSED TO ADORE HER... AND HERE I WAS (FROM MY PERSPECTIVE) ONE-SIDEDLY TAKING IT TOO FAR.
I HONESTLY THOUGHT I WOULD LOOK DESPERATELY CLINGY IF I WAS TO ADMIT MY FEELINGS.
NO!
I WASN'T GOING TO RUIN THIS FOR US.
SO, INSTEAD, WE KEPT PLAYING OUR USUAL GAMES BETTER, HARDER...
WITH MORE DEDICATION.
AND BEHIND OUR PASSIONATE PERFORMANCES, WE HOPED...
"MAYBE SHE WILL SEE."
"MAYBE SHE WILL RECOGNIZE IT!"
"MAYBE IN THIS DEVOTION AND PUSHING OF BOUNDARIES, SHE WILL UNDERSTAND..."
YEAH...I'M WELL AWARE THAT I WAS DOING THE SAME DAMN THING THAT RUINED MY PRIOR RELATIONSHIP...
SIGNALS AND HINTS ARE A SHITTY REPLACEMENT FOR HONEST COMMUNICATION. WHAT CAN I SAY? HINDSIGHT IS 20/20!
BUT YEAH...
SPEAKING OF SIGNALS AND TRYING TO IMPRESS EACH OTHER...

I REMEMBER THIS DOCUMENTARY I SAW ONCE. IT WAS ABOUT THE MATING HABITS OF ANIMALS...

NO! I WAS NOT SPECIFICALLY ***LOOKING*** FOR IT, MIKE AND I WERE TEENAGERS, IT WAS ON TV, AND WE FOUND IT HILARIOUS.

ANYWAYS, THERE WAS THIS WEIRDASS ***BIRD*** DOING THIS ELABORATE DANCE TO ATTRACT ITS MATE.

THE ONLY REASON I'M EVEN MENTIONING THIS IS, WELL...

THAT'S THE CRAP THAT WAS GOING THROUGH MY MIND THAT DAY...

SEE, THAT WAS THE DAY I GOT MY ***NIPPLES*** PIERCED...

ALLY HAD NO IDEA ***WHEN*** THIS WAS GONNA HAPPEN...

I WAS PLANNING ON SURPRISING HER...

I WAS, TO PUT IT MILDLY, ***FREAKING*** OUT!

PEOPLE SAY YOU SHOULD BE YOURSELF, YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHANGE FOR ANYONE...

BUT...WE ***DO*** CHANGE...

WE DO TRY TO PUT OUR BEST FOOT FORWARD TO IMPRESS EACH OTHER...

BE IT AS SIMPLE AS ACTING NICER, DRESSING BETTER, TUCKING IN YOUR GUT...OR AS POTENTIALLY STUPID AS DOING STUFF LIKE THIS.

WE ARE ALL, AT SOME POINT, LIKE THAT WEIRDASS DANCING BIRD, TRYING TO IMPRESS EACH OTHER.

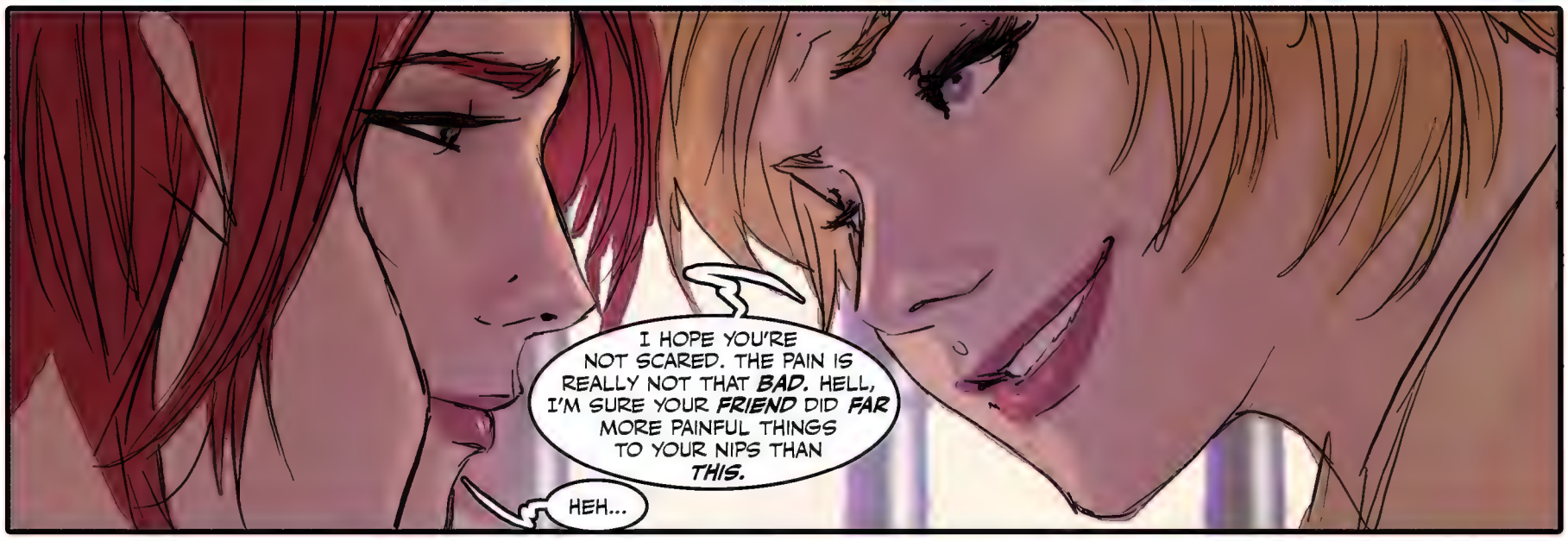
OKAY! SO, LISA, THIS IS KATJA! SHE WILL BE DOING YOUR PIERCING.

HEY!

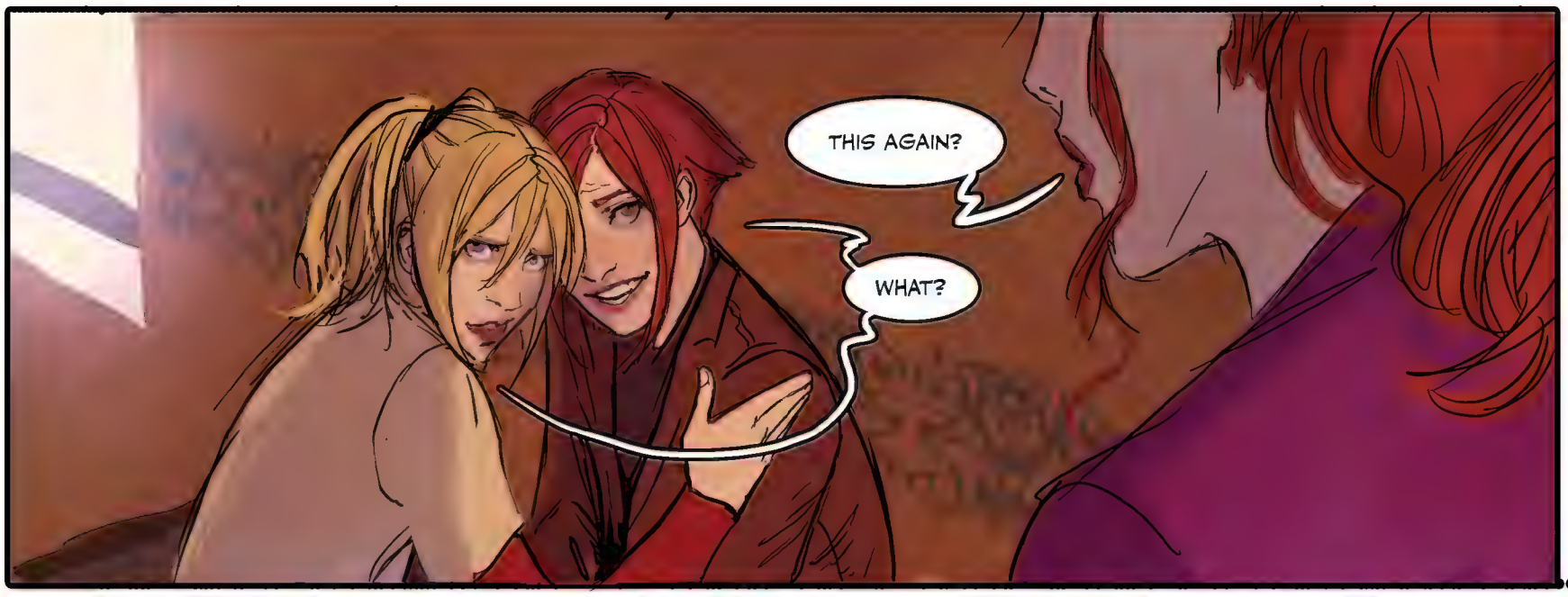
OH...UM H-HEY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE GONNA DO IT, ANNE.

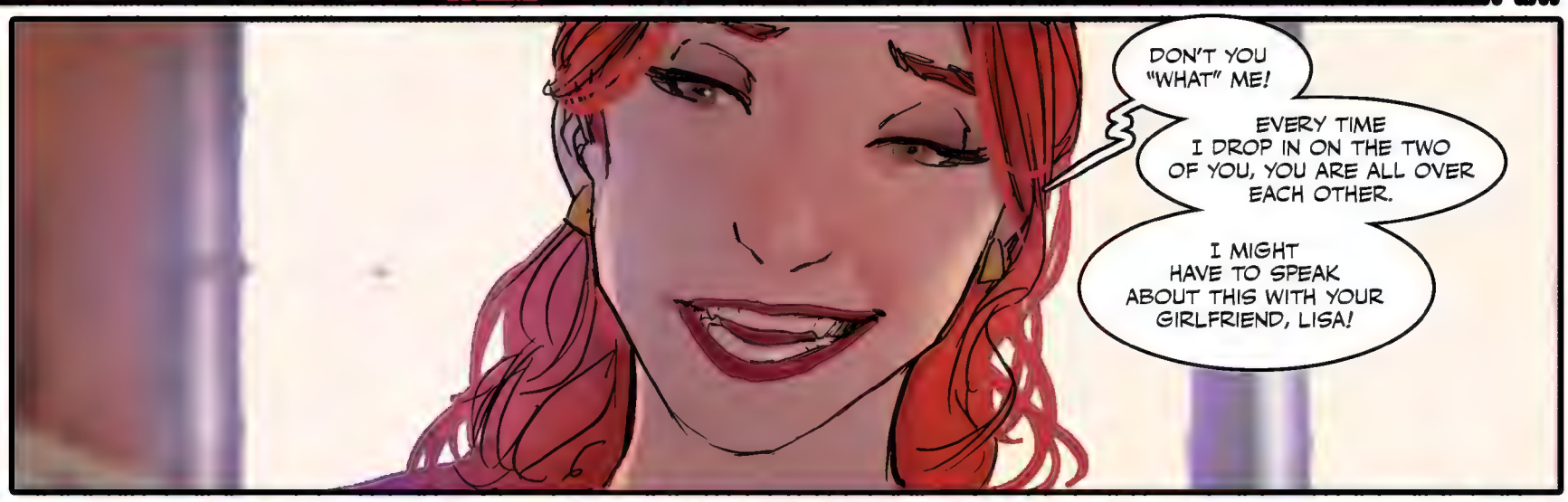
I THINK YOUR FRIEND NEEDS A PEP TALK WHILE I GET MY STUFF READY.

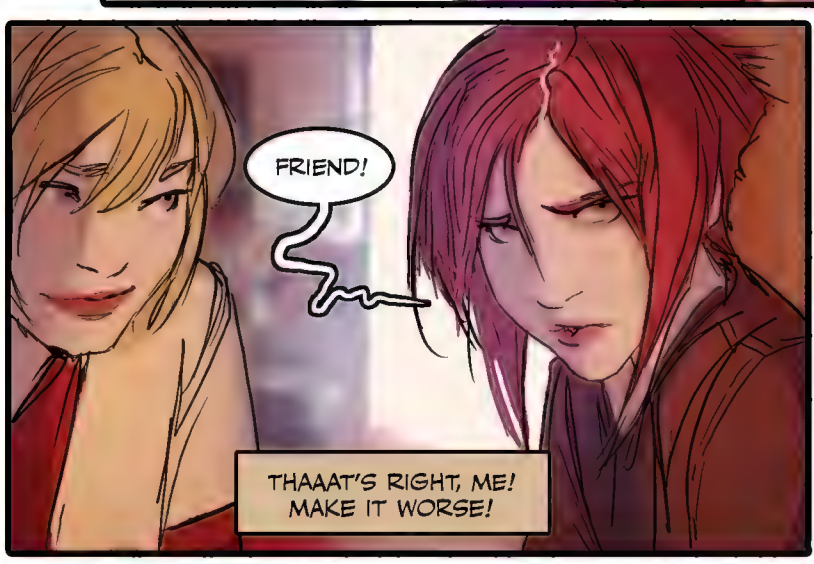
HEY, YOU ALL RIGHT?
UH-HUH...

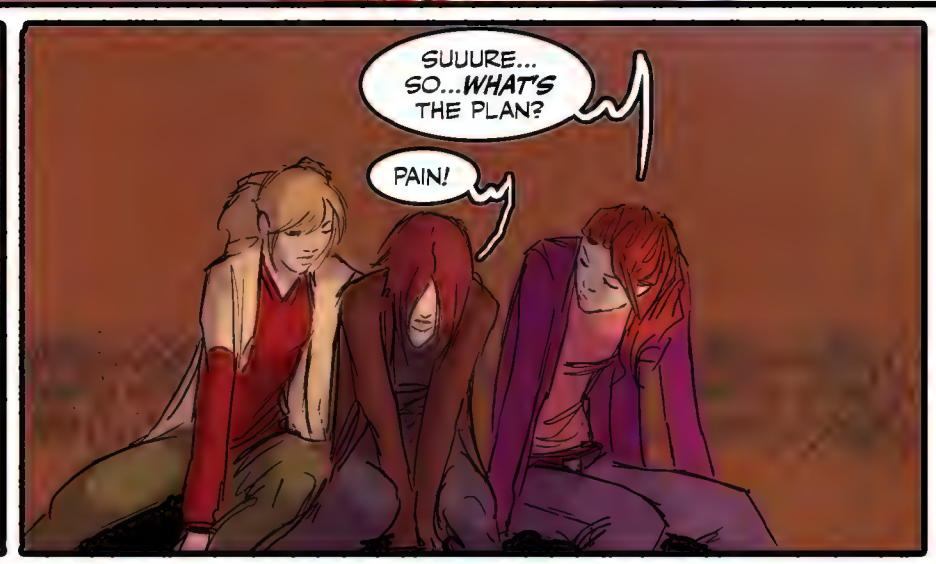

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT SCARED. THE PAIN IS REALLY NOT THAT *BAD.* HELL, I'M SURE YOUR *FRIEND* DID *FAR* MORE PAINFUL THINGS TO YOUR NIPS THAN *THIS.*
HEH...

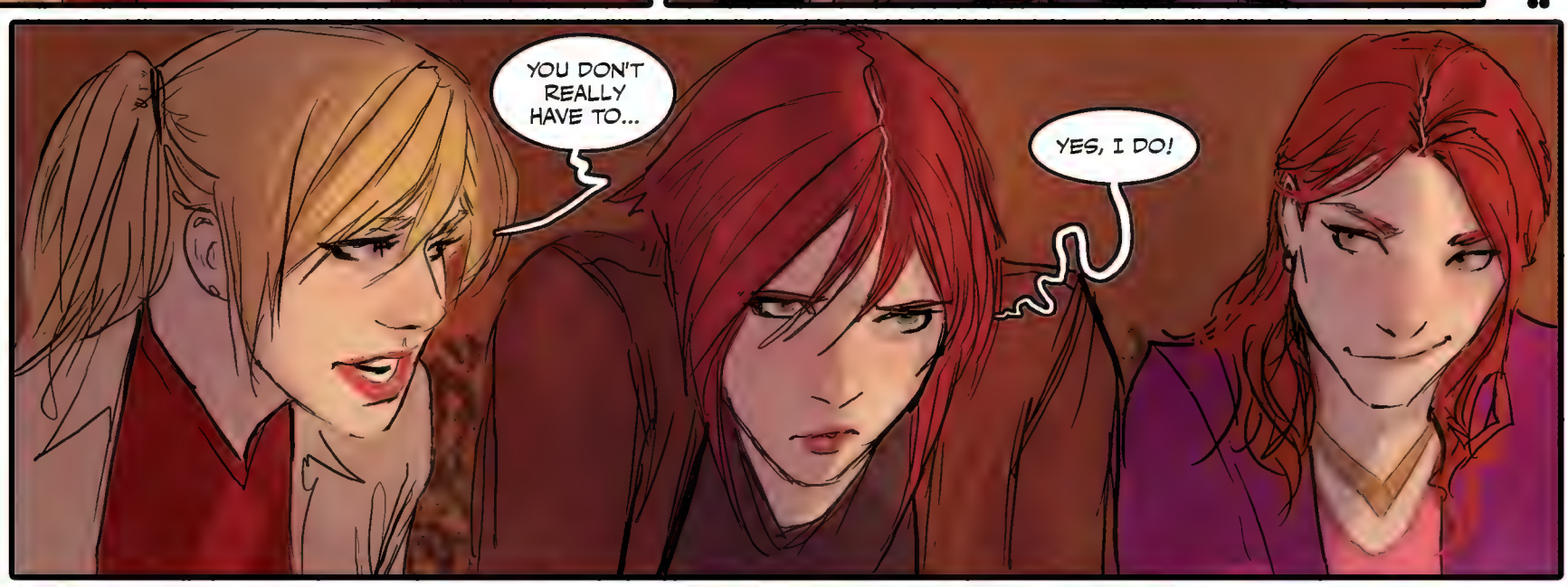
HEY, *WAIT UP!* I'M NOT MISSING...

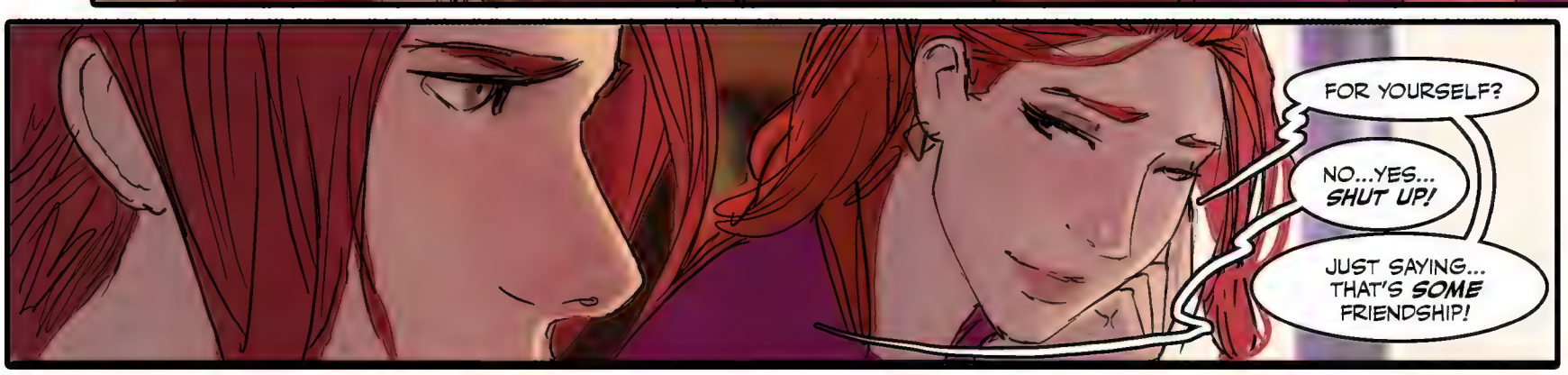

THIS AGAIN?
WHAT?


DON'T YOU "WHAT" ME!
EVERY TIME I DROP IN ON THE TWO OF YOU, YOU ARE ALL OVER EACH OTHER.
I MIGHT HAVE TO SPEAK ABOUT THIS WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND, LISA!

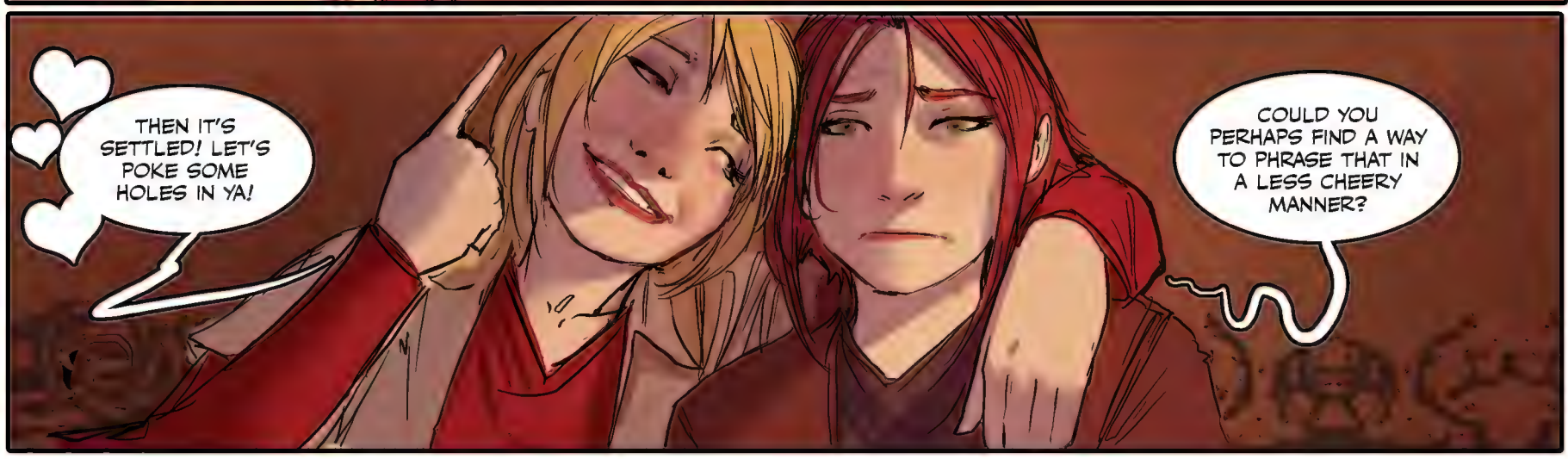

FRIEND!
THAAAT'S RIGHT, ME! MAKE IT WORSE!

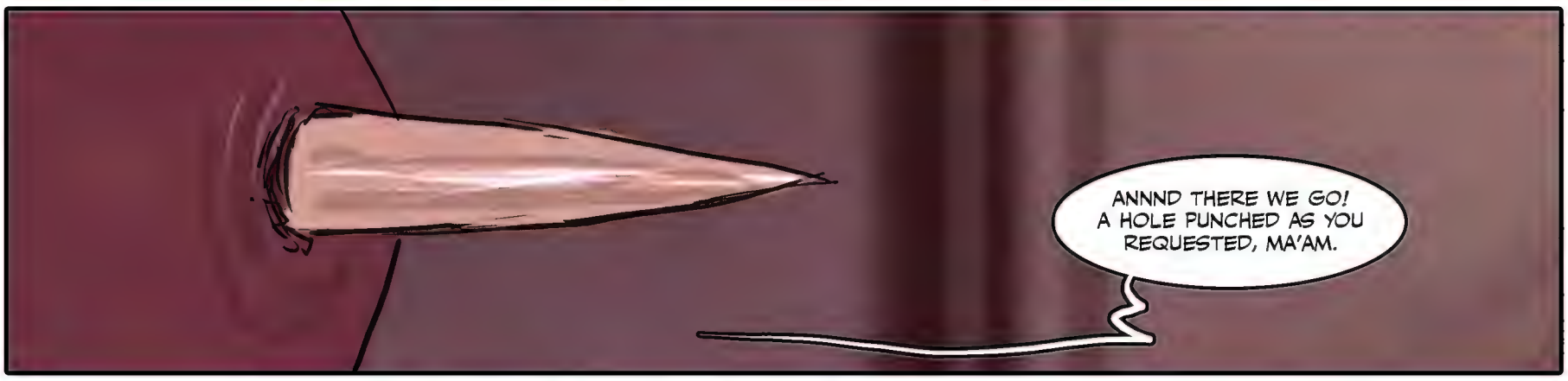

SUUURE... SO...WHAT'S THE PLAN?
PAIN!

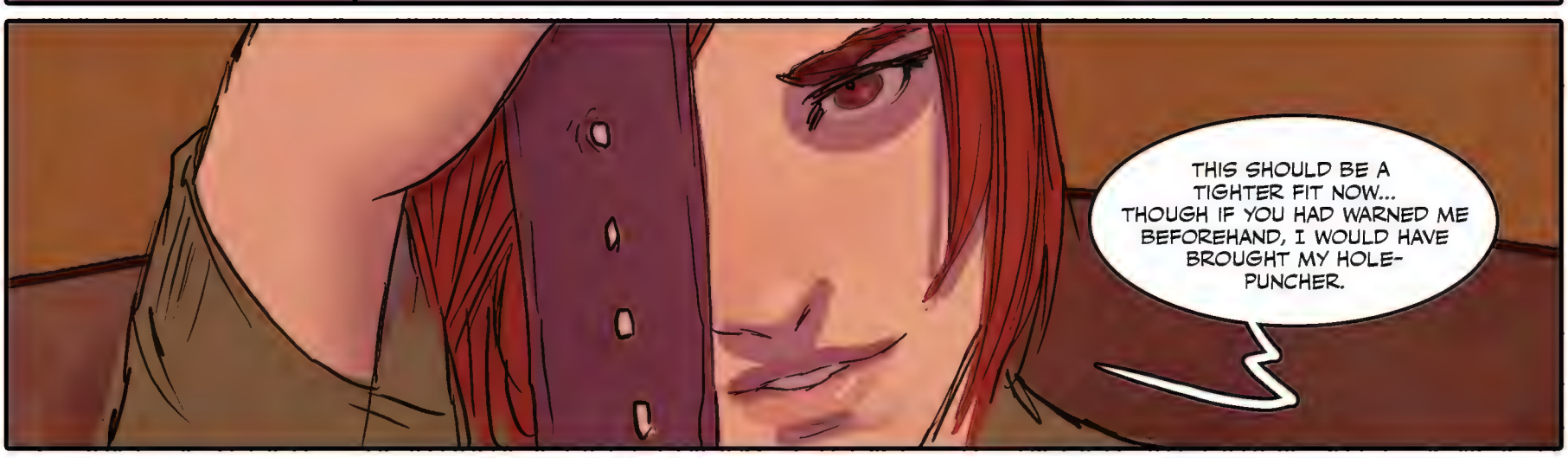

YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE TO...
YES, I DO!


FOR YOURSELF?
NO...YES... SHUT UP!
JUST SAYING... THAT'S SOME FRIENDSHIP!

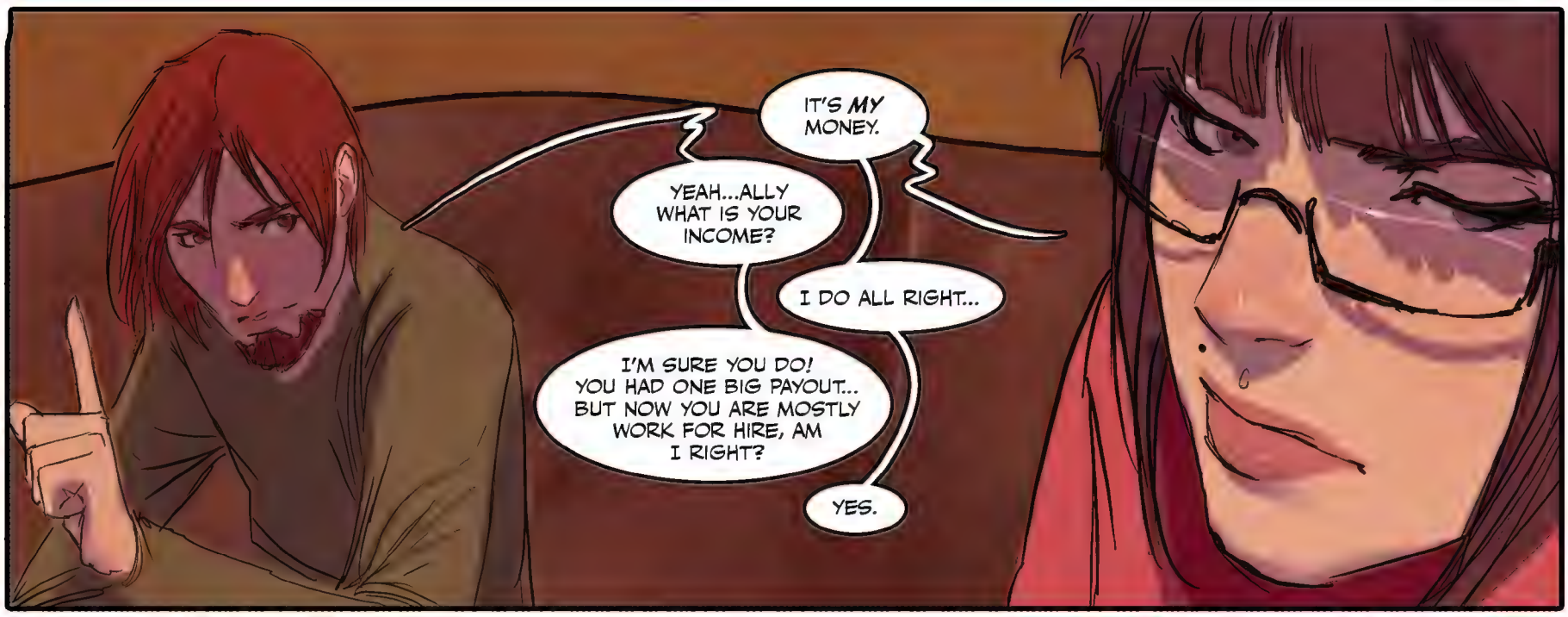
THE BEST...
AH, IF YOU COULD VOMIT WORDS...

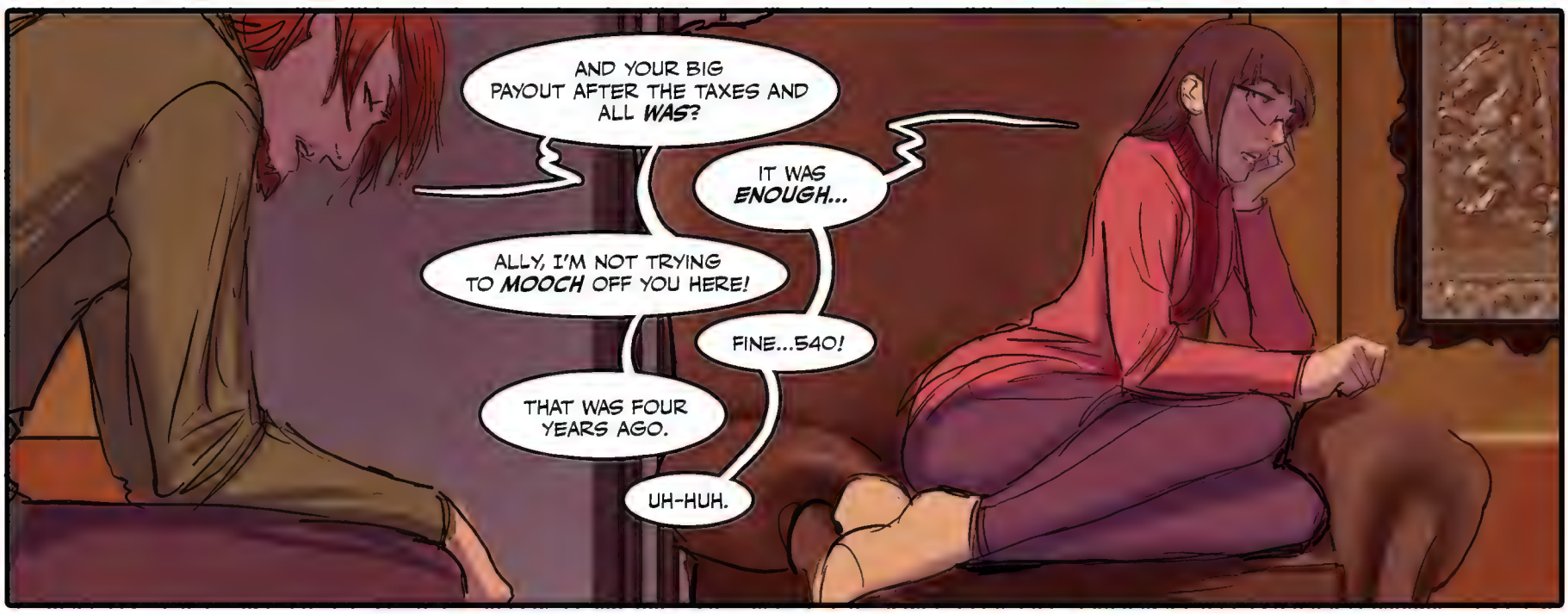

THEN IT'S SETTLED! LET'S POKE SOME HOLES IN YA!
COULD YOU PERHAPS FIND A WAY TO PHRASE THAT IN A LESS CHEERY MANNER?


ANNND THERE WE GO! A HOLE PUNCHED AS YOU REQUESTED, MA'AM.


THIS SHOULD BE A TIGHTER FIT NOW... THOUGH IF YOU HAD WARNED ME BEFOREHAND, I WOULD HAVE BROUGHT MY HOLE-PUNCHER.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT -- IT WAS CHEAP TO BEGIN WITH...NOOOW, ABOUT THAT RIG IDEA.
I SAID NO!
OH, COME ON! DON'T BE SUCH A DICK!
I'M NOT! I STILL BELIEVE YOU ARE BURNING TOO MUCH MONEY ON UNNECESSARY GEAR.
IT'S NOT UNNECESSARY!
ALLY, I'VE SEEN YOUR ROOM, WHAT YOU GOT THERE WOULD SUFFICE ANY DOM FOR A LIFETIME!

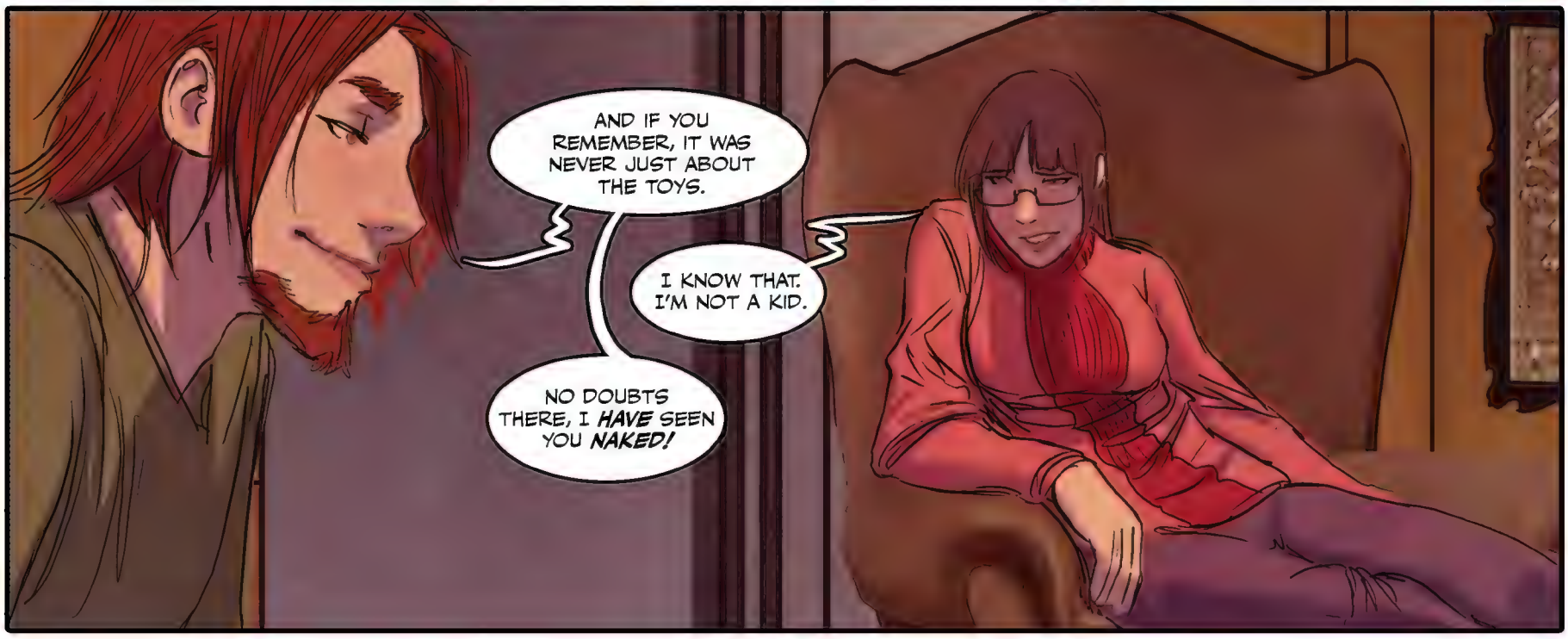

IT'S MY MONEY.
YEAH...ALLY WHAT IS YOUR INCOME?
I DO ALL RIGHT...
I'M SURE YOU DO! YOU HAD ONE BIG PAYOUT... BUT NOW YOU ARE MOSTLY WORK FOR HIRE, AM I RIGHT?
YES.


AND YOUR BIG PAYOUT AFTER THE TAXES AND ALL WAS?
IT WAS ENOUGH...
ALLY, I'M NOT TRYING TO MOOCH OFF YOU HERE!
FINE...540!
THAT WAS FOUR YEARS AGO.
UH-HUH.

AFTER BUYING AND FURNISHING THIS HOUSE, I'M GUESSING NOT MUCH WAS LEFT?
GET TO THE POINT!

WELL...BESIDES THE FACT THAT YOU SPEND MONEY LIKE A CHILD IN A TANTRUM...
HEY!
WHY WAS IT YOU BOUGHT THIS IMPRACTICAL AS FUCK HOUSE AGAIN?

MY POINT IS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PLAY THIS RICH DOMINATRIX ROLE...YOU ARE BETTER THAN THAT! I WOULD KNOW.
HEH... YEAH, YOU WOULD...

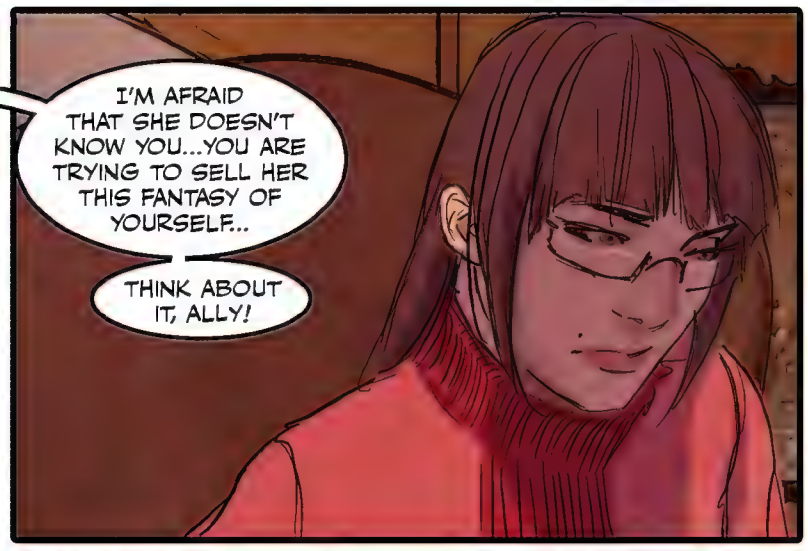

AND IF YOU REMEMBER, IT WAS NEVER JUST ABOUT THE TOYS.
I KNOW THAT. I'M NOT A KID.
NO DOUBTS THERE, I HAVE SEEN YOU NAKED!

THAT JUST SOUNDED ALL KINDS OF WRONG...

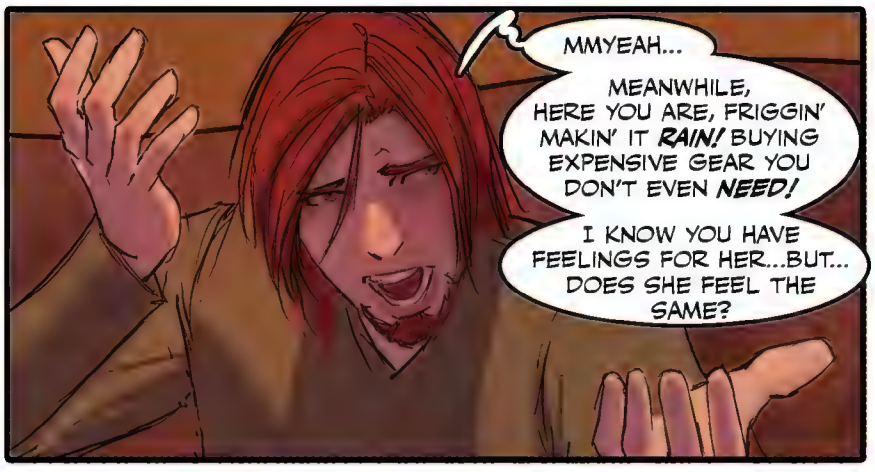
UGH...I KNOW... GIVE ME A BREAK, I SLEPT LIKE FIVE HOURS AT BEST. MY WIT IS SHARP AS A DONUT RIGHT NOW.

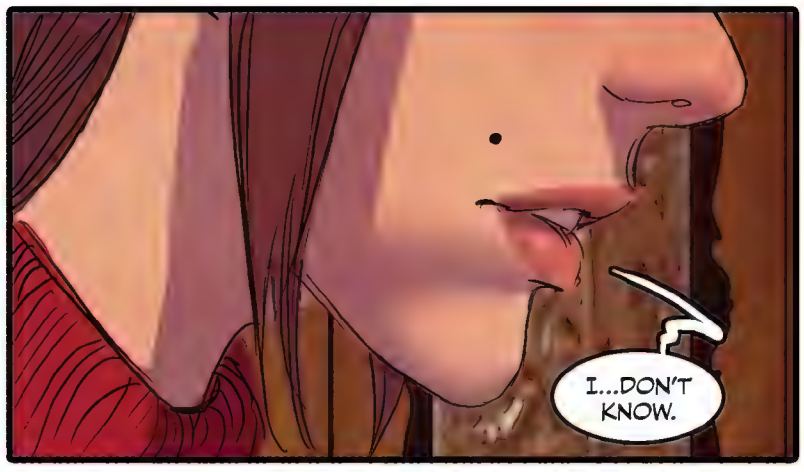
LISTEN, ALLY.. I KNOW YOU LIKE LISA.

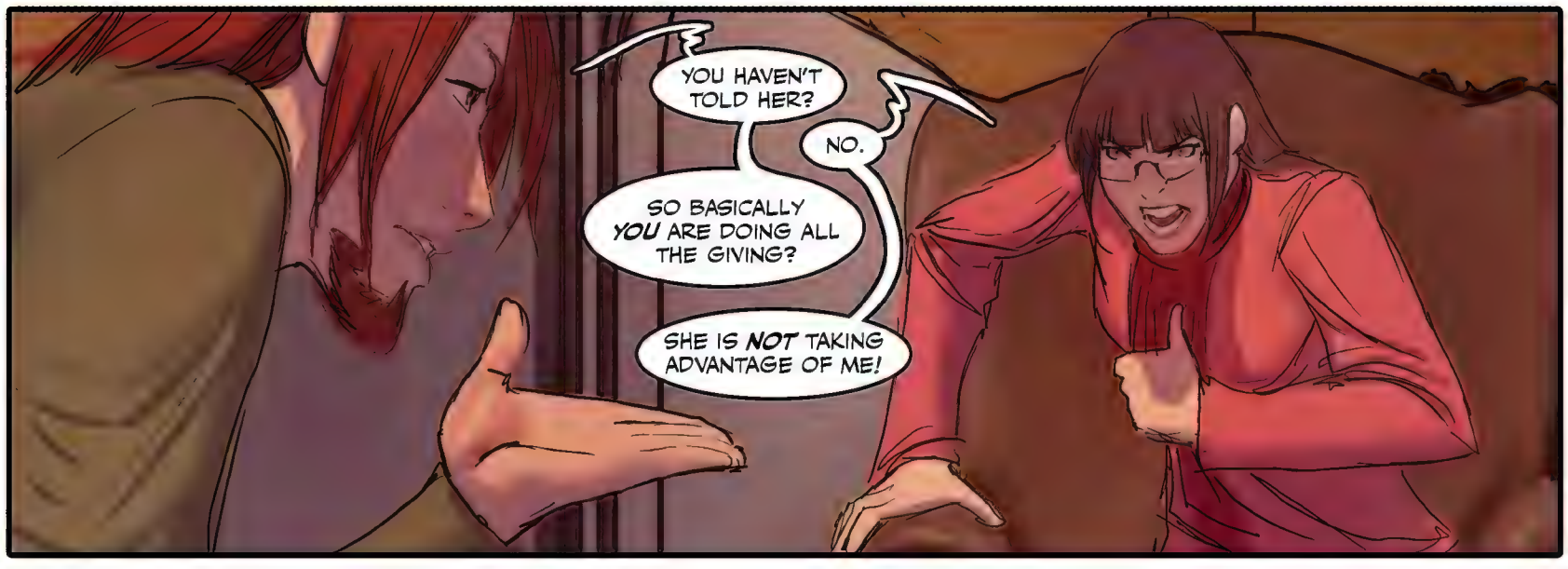
I LIKE HER TOO, SHE IS AWESOME...BUT THINK ABOUT IT...
YOU SEEM TO BE RUSHING TOWARDS... FUCK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT... I MEAN YOU ARE ASKING ABOUT A FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR RIG! AND THAT ON THE HEELS OF THAT BED!

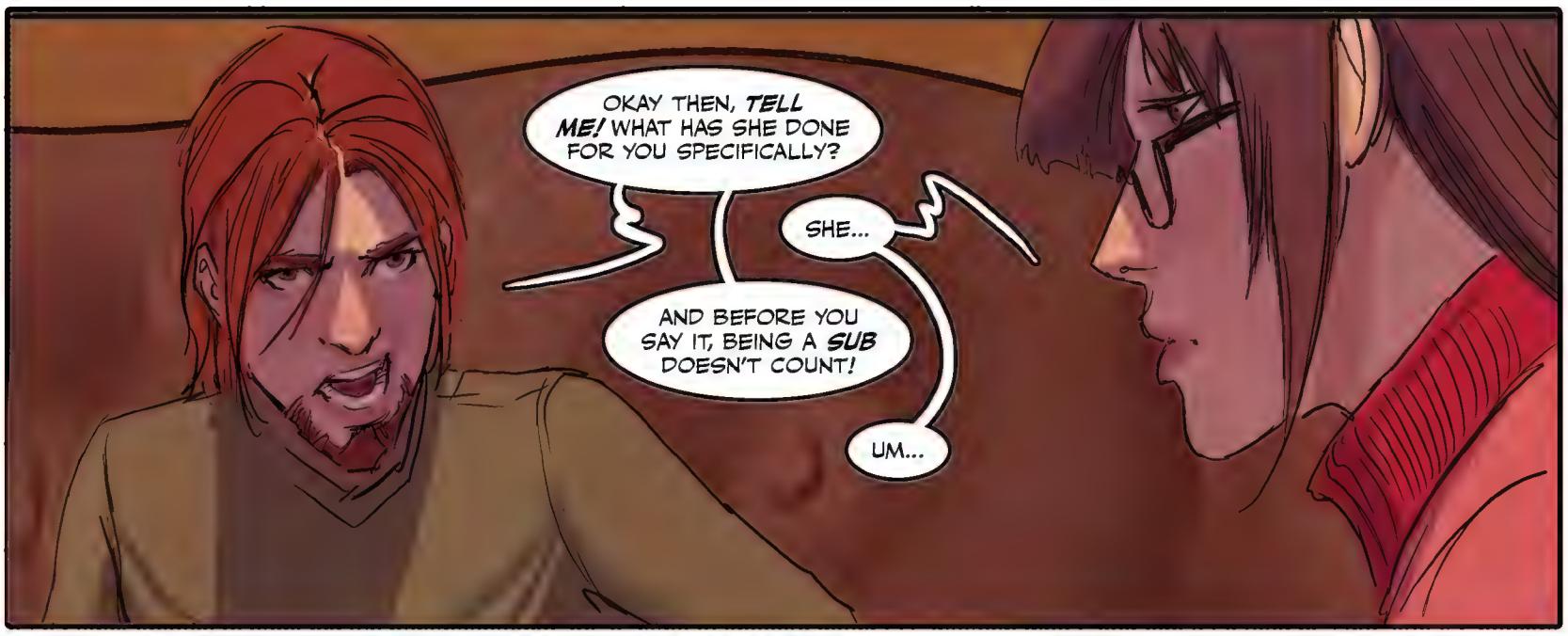

I'M AFRAID THAT SHE DOESN'T KNOW YOU...YOU ARE TRYING TO SELL HER THIS FANTASY OF YOURSELF...
THINK ABOUT IT, ALLY!

YOU KNEW HER FOR TWO MONTHS ONLINE... THEN THREE WEEKS IN PERSON... AND YOU ASKED HER TO MOVE IN.
SHE IS PAYING RENT.

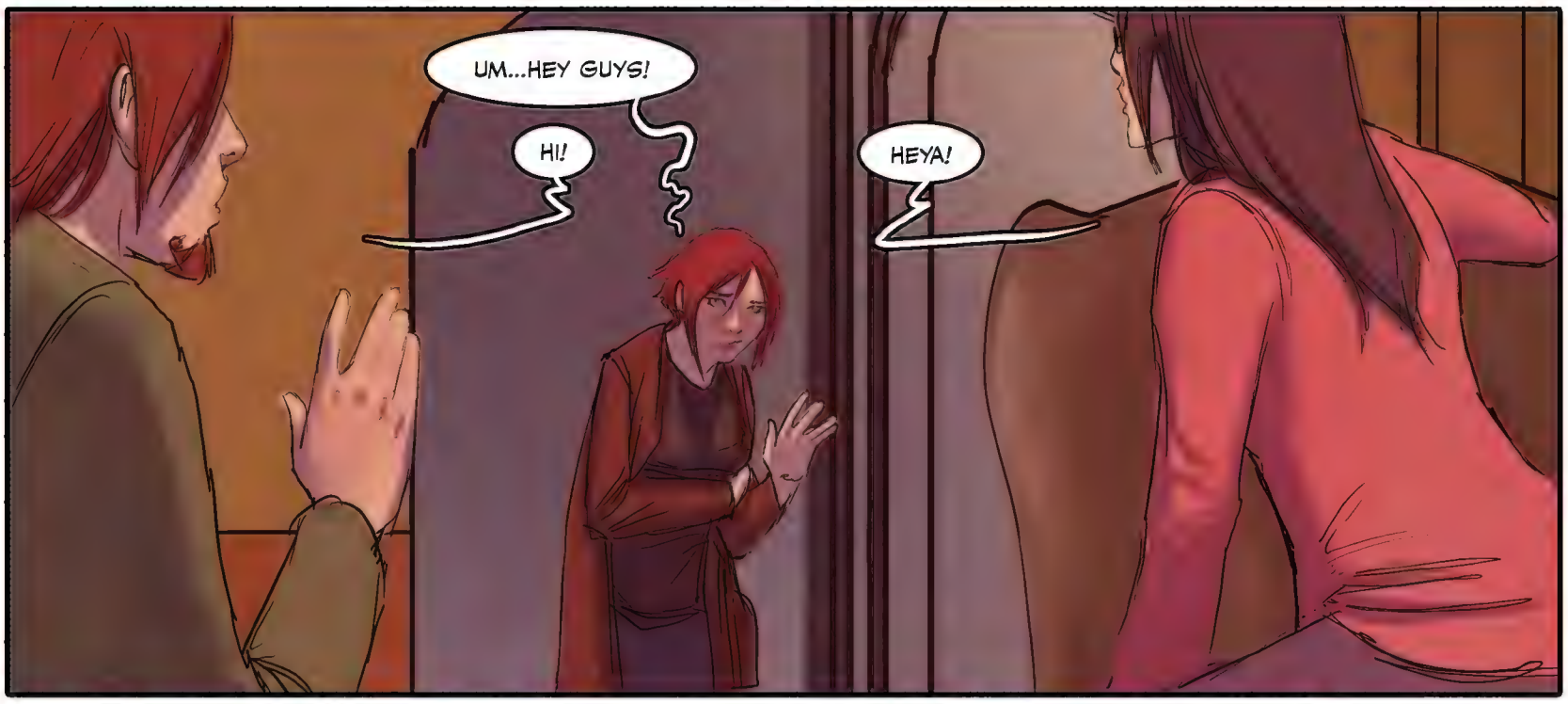

MMYEAH...
MEANWHILE, HERE YOU ARE, FRIGGIN' MAKIN' IT RAIN! BUYING EXPENSIVE GEAR YOU DON'T EVEN NEED!
I KNOW YOU HAVE FEELINGS FOR HER...BUT... DOES SHE FEEL THE SAME?


I...DON'T KNOW.


YOU HAVEN'T TOLD HER?
NO.
SO BASICALLY YOU ARE DOING ALL THE GIVING?
SHE IS NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ME!


OKAY THEN, TELL ME! WHAT HAS SHE DONE FOR YOU SPECIFICALLY?
SHE...
AND BEFORE YOU SAY IT, BEING A SUB DOESN'T COUNT!
UM...

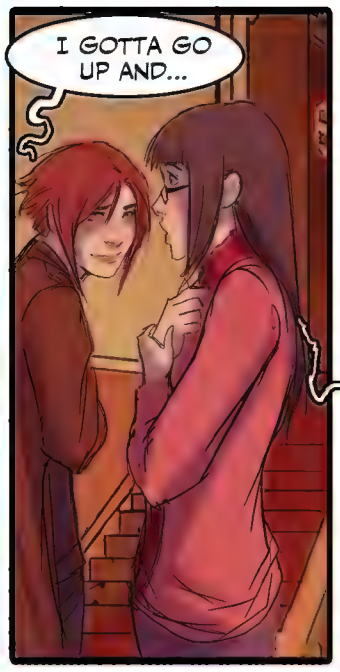
YOU...DON'T KNOW HER AS I DO!

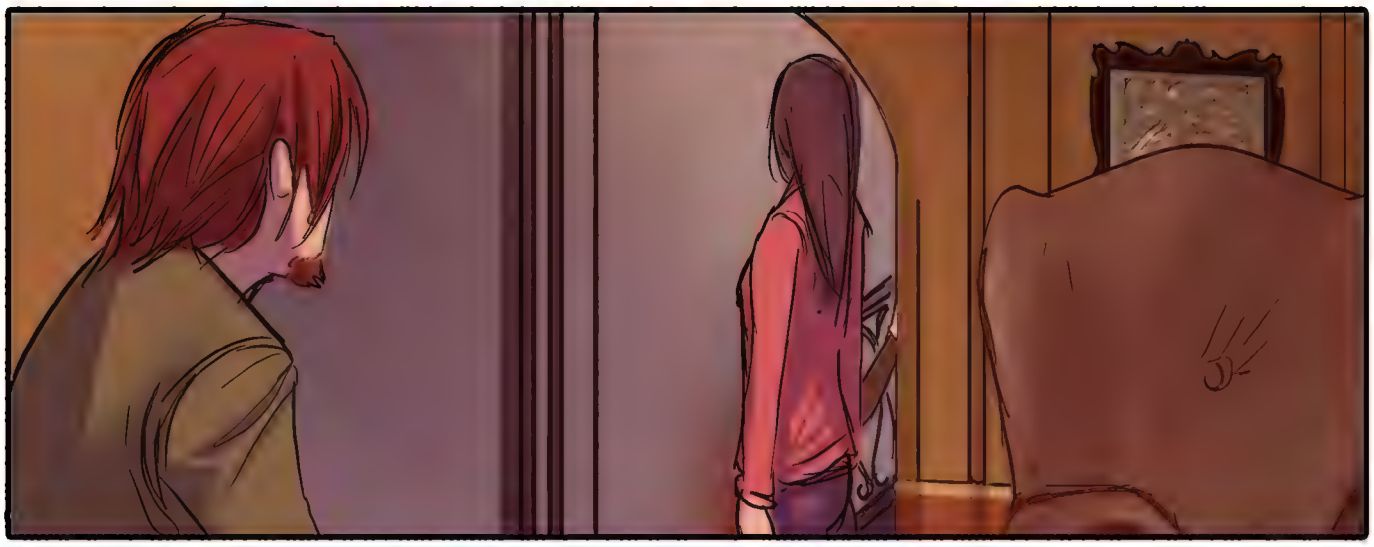

UM...HEY GUYS!
HI!
HEYA!

LISA? YOU OKAY?

WHUT? OH, UMM...YEAH, FINE!

SO, WHAT'S WITH THE HUNCH?


I GOTTA GO UP AND...
Y...YEAH, I'LL BE THERE IN A MINUTE!



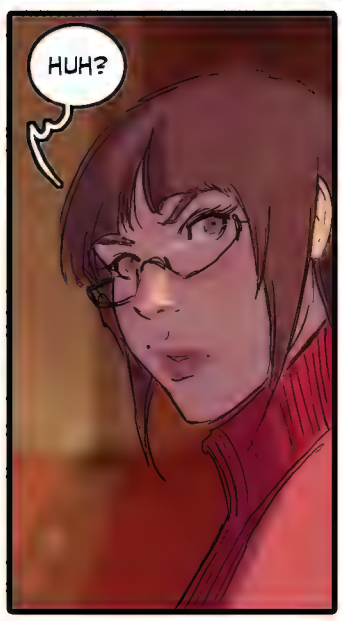
YOU EVER FUCKING DOUBT HER AGAIN AND OUR FRIENDSHIP IS OVER!

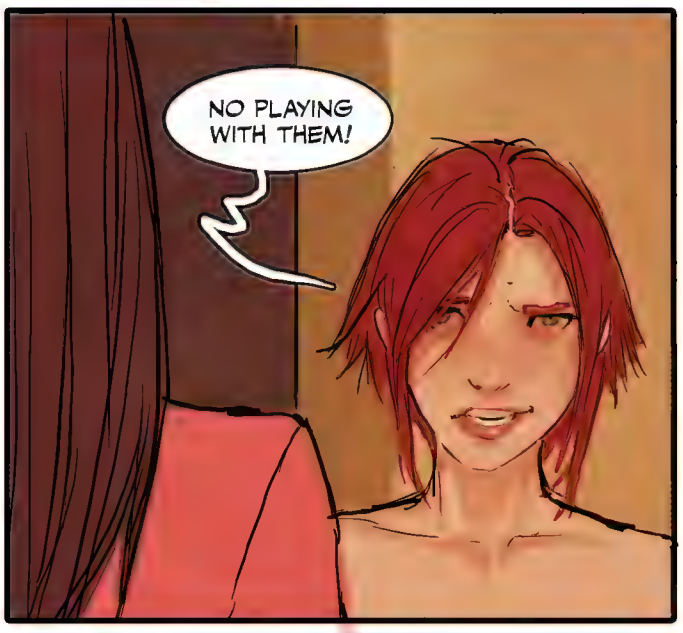
SO...SHE PROVED ME WRONG, HUH?
"PROVED YOU WRONG" DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COVER IT!

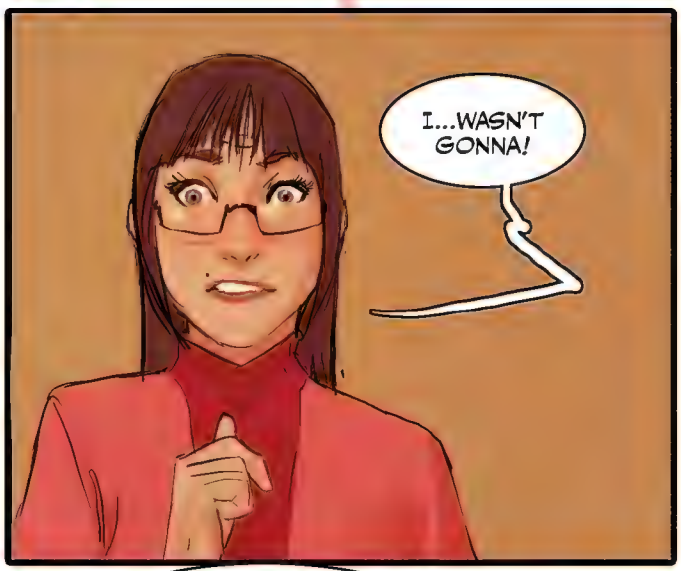
THEN I TRULY AM HAPPY FOR YOU, ALLY!

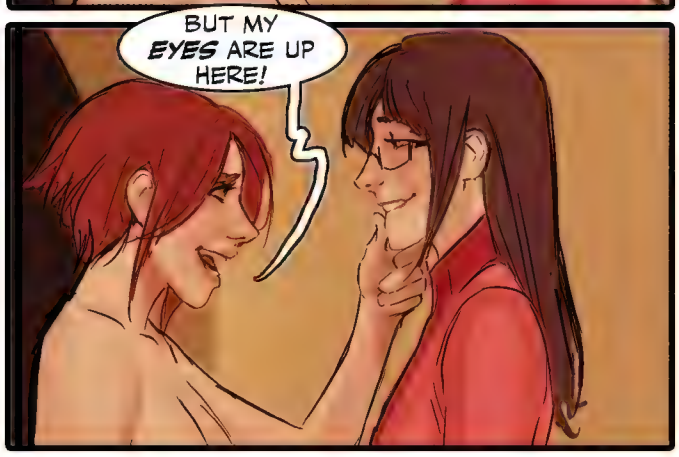
THANK YOU.
I'LL BE OFF NOW...LEAVE YOU FRIENDS TO DO YOUR "FRIEND" STUFF!

YOU JELLY?
HEH! ACTUALLY, NO! I GOT ME A DATE!


HUH?







MEMORIES SURE ARE FUNNY...

THE WAY SOME OF THEM HAVE THIS WAY OF POSITIVELY ***ENGRAVING*** THEMSELVES IN YOUR MIND.

I REMEMBER THIS KISS ***PERFECTLY...***

THE WAY SHE HUNCHED OVER ON HER TIPTOES TO AVOID HURTING ME...

I REMEMBER A FLEETING THOUGHT OF HER TAKING QUITE A BIT OF PLEASURE IN HURTING THOSE SAME NIPPLES ON OTHER OCCASIONS...

NOT ***THAT*** DAY.

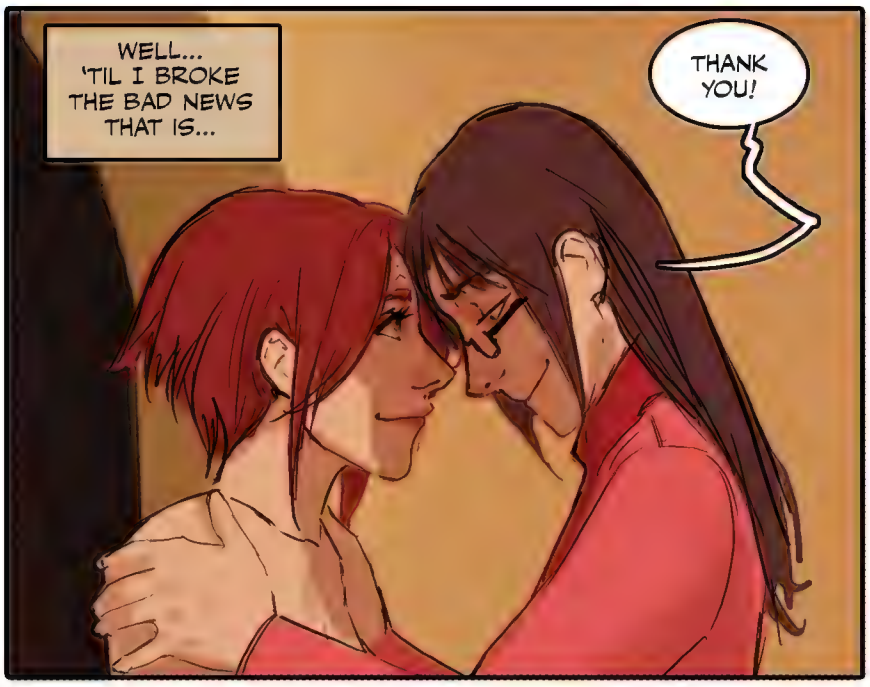
EVEN THOUGH HER LITTLE PIERCED NIPPLE FETISH WAS SEXUAL IN NATURE.

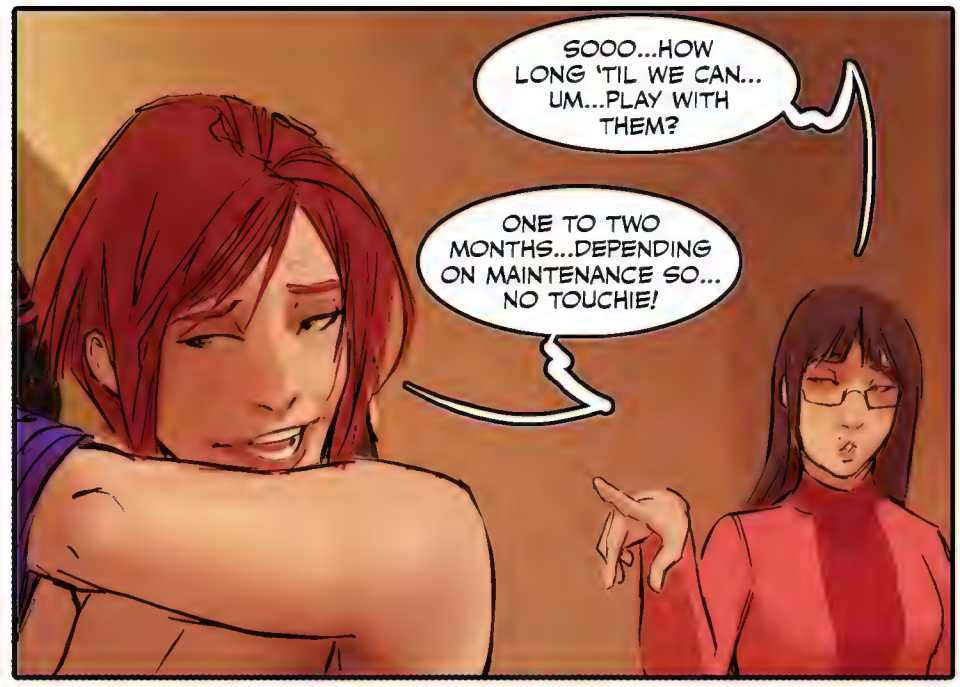
HER GRATITUDE THAT DAY WAS ANYTHING BUT.

I KNEW NOTHING OF HER TALK WITH ALAN...OF HER FEARS AND DOUBTS...

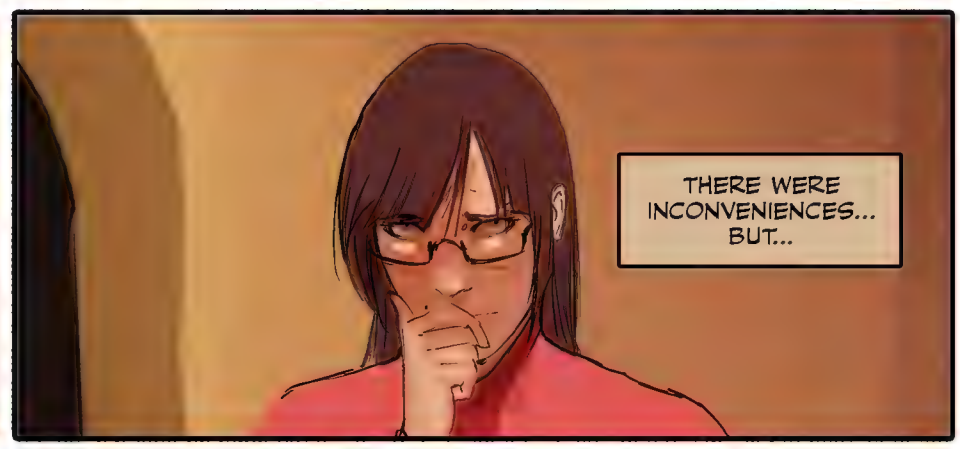
I KNEW SHE WAS HAPPY JUST THEN...

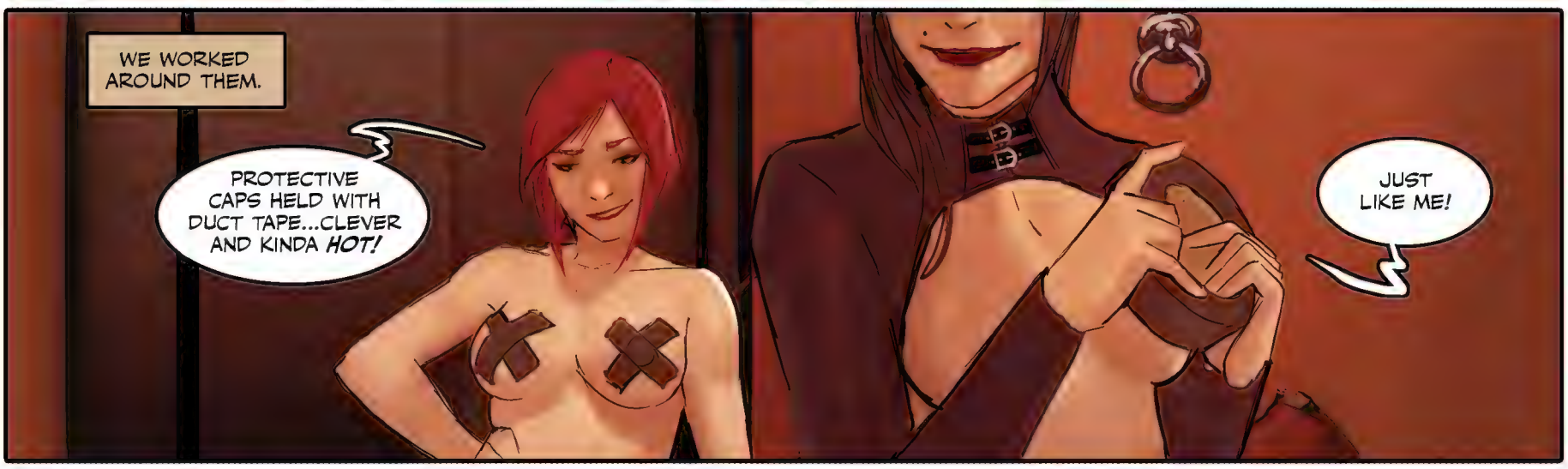
AND THAT WAS ENOUGH.

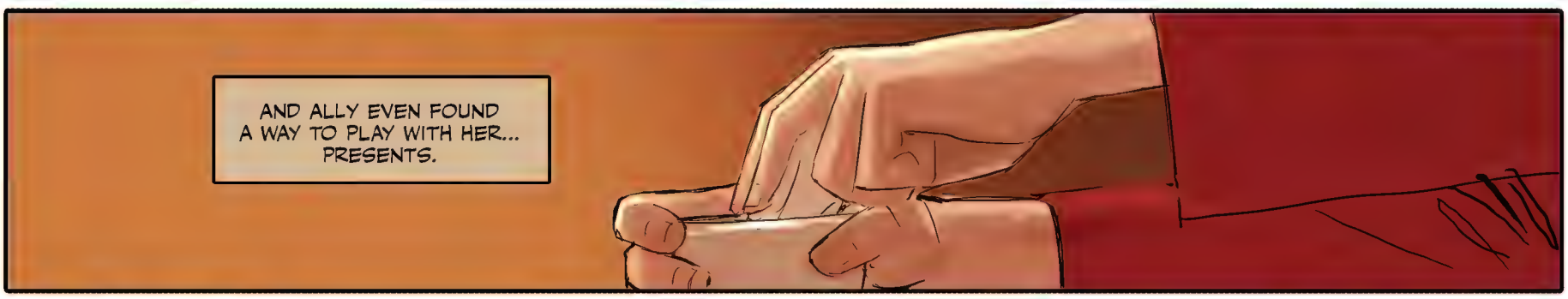

WELL... 'TIL I BROKE THE BAD NEWS THAT IS...
THANK YOU!

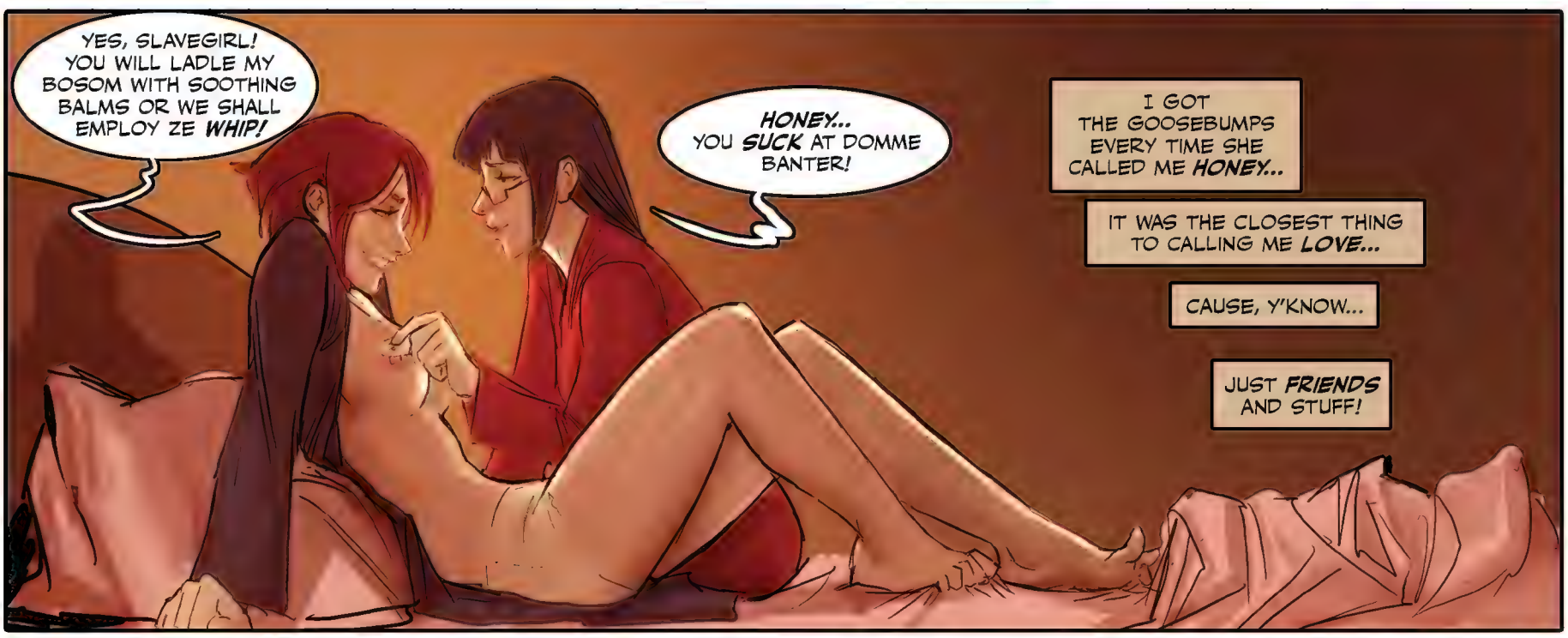

SOOO...HOW LONG 'TIL WE CAN... UM...PLAY WITH THEM?
ONE TO TWO MONTHS...DEPENDING ON MAINTENANCE SO... NO TOUCHIE!

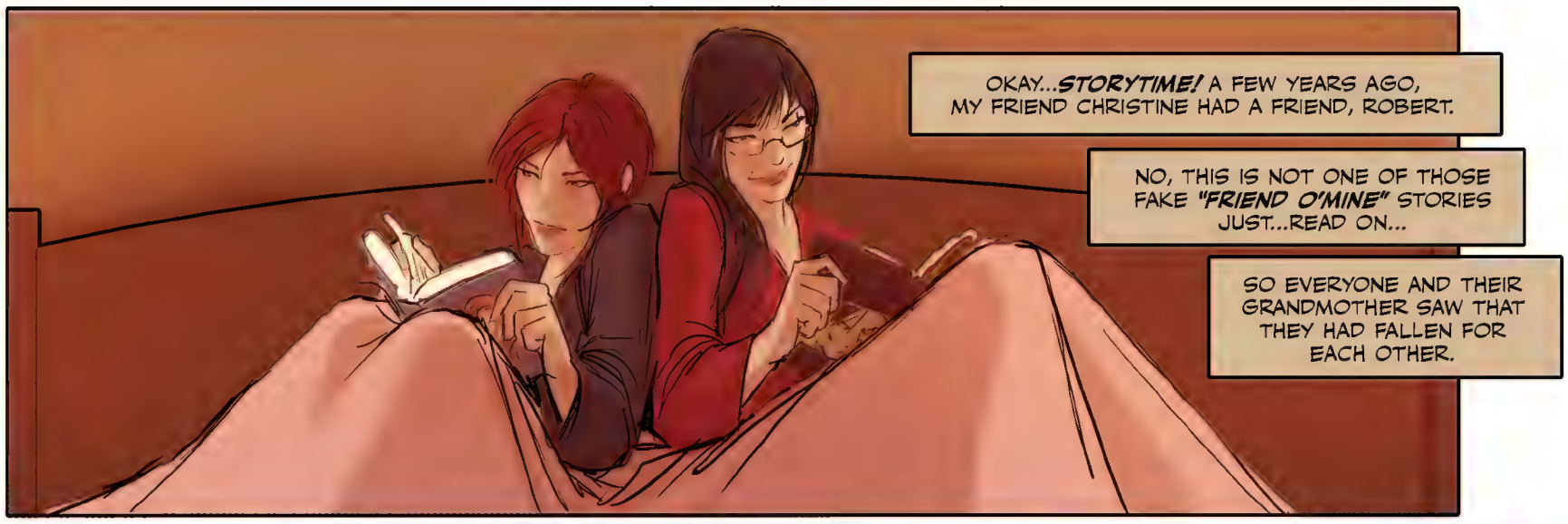
AH!


THERE WERE INCONVENIENCES... BUT...

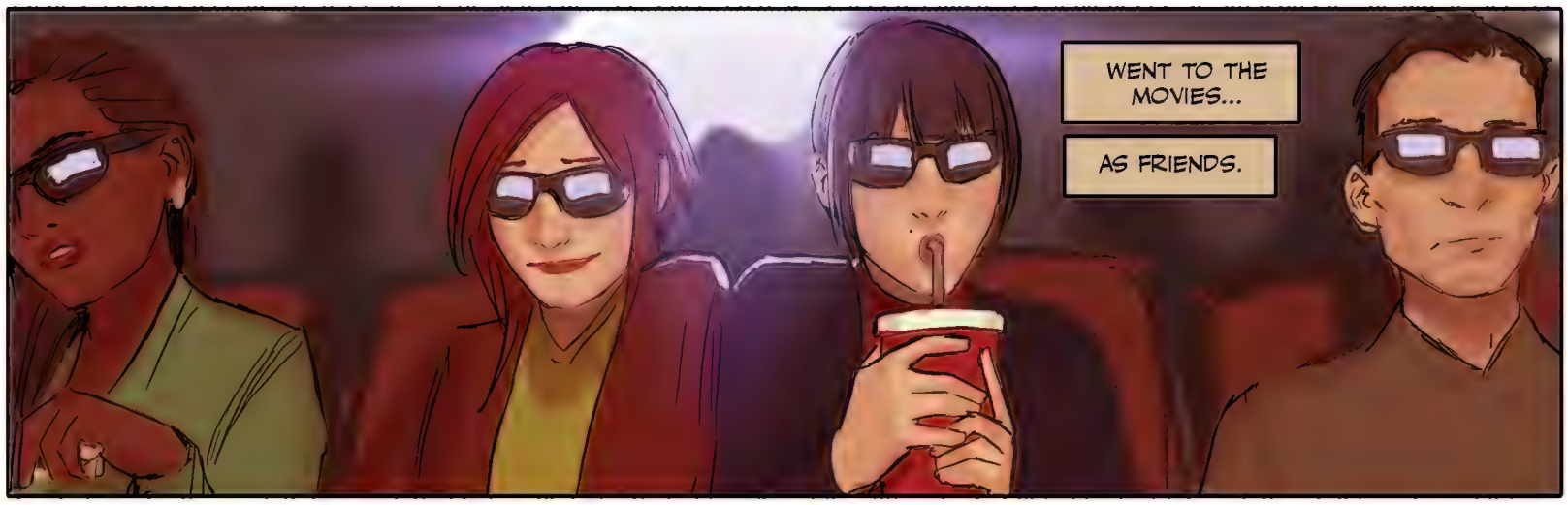

WE WORKED AROUND THEM.
PROTECTIVE CAPS HELD WITH DUCT TAPE...CLEVER AND KINDA HOT!
JUST LIKE ME!

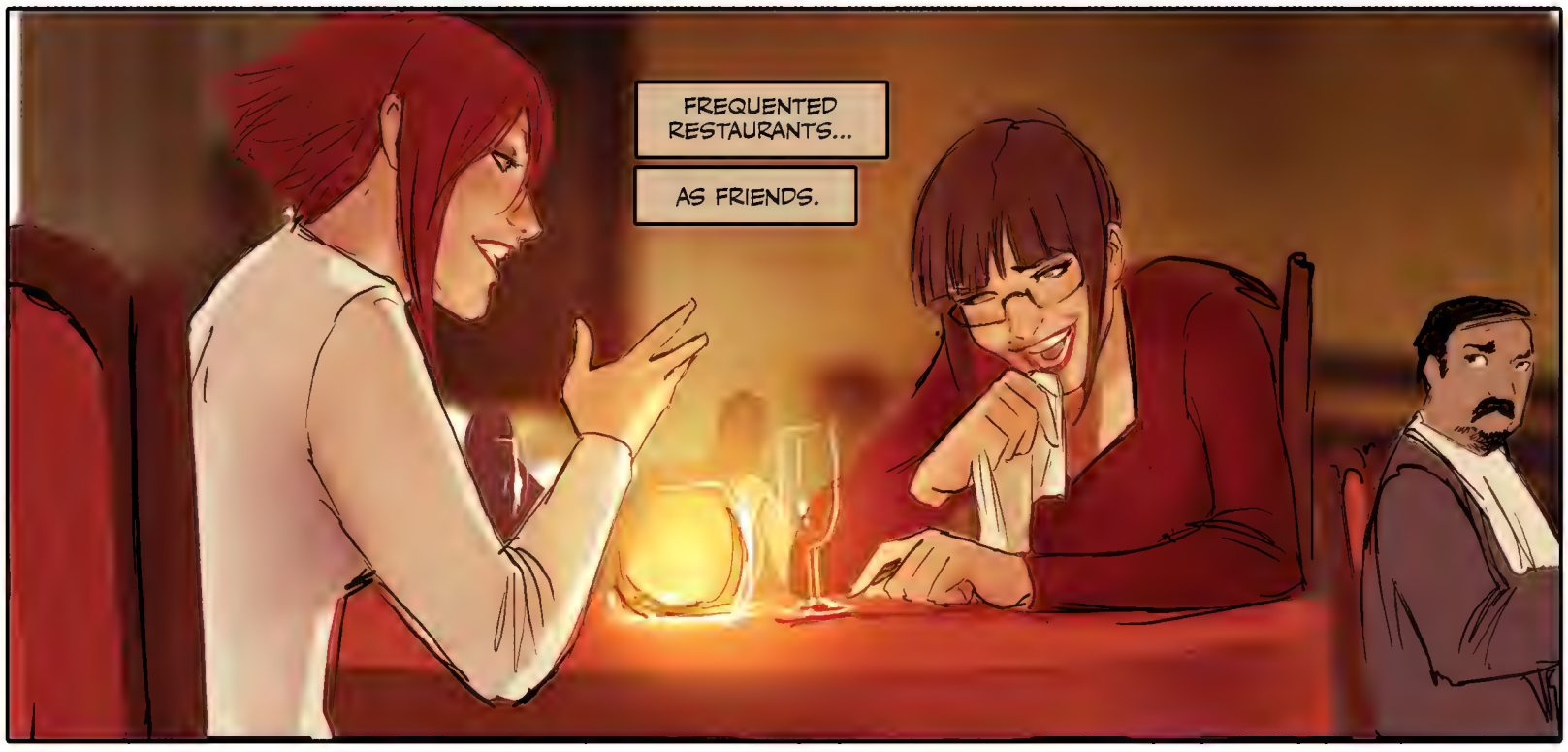

AND ALLY EVEN FOUND A WAY TO PLAY WITH HER... PRESENTS.

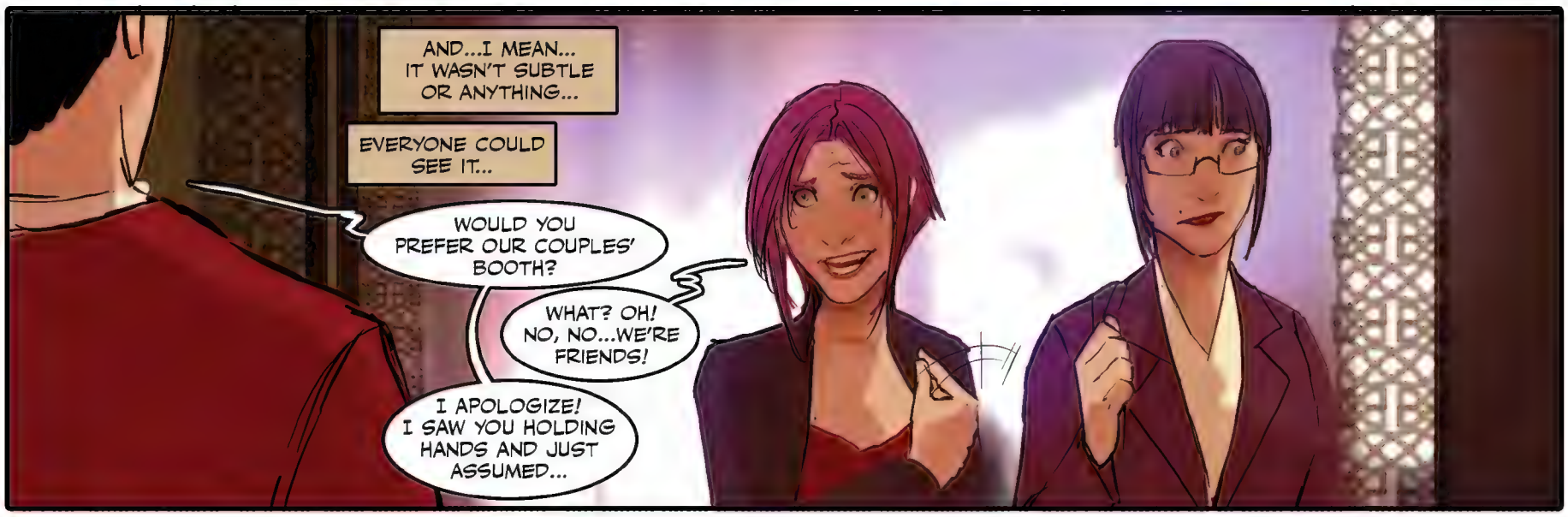

YES, SLAVEGIRL! YOU WILL LADLE MY BOSOM WITH SOOTHING BALMS OR WE SHALL EMPLOY ZE WHIP!
HONEY... YOU SUCK AT DOMME BANTER!
I GOT THE GOOSEBUMPS EVERY TIME SHE CALLED ME HONEY...
IT WAS THE CLOSEST THING TO CALLING ME LOVE...
CAUSE, Y'KNOW...
JUST FRIENDS AND STUFF!


OKAY...STORYTIME! A FEW YEARS AGO, MY FRIEND CHRISTINE HAD A FRIEND, ROBERT.
NO, THIS IS NOT ONE OF THOSE FAKE "FRIEND O'MINE" STORIES JUST...READ ON...
SO EVERYONE AND THEIR GRANDMOTHER SAW THAT THEY HAD FALLEN FOR EACH OTHER.

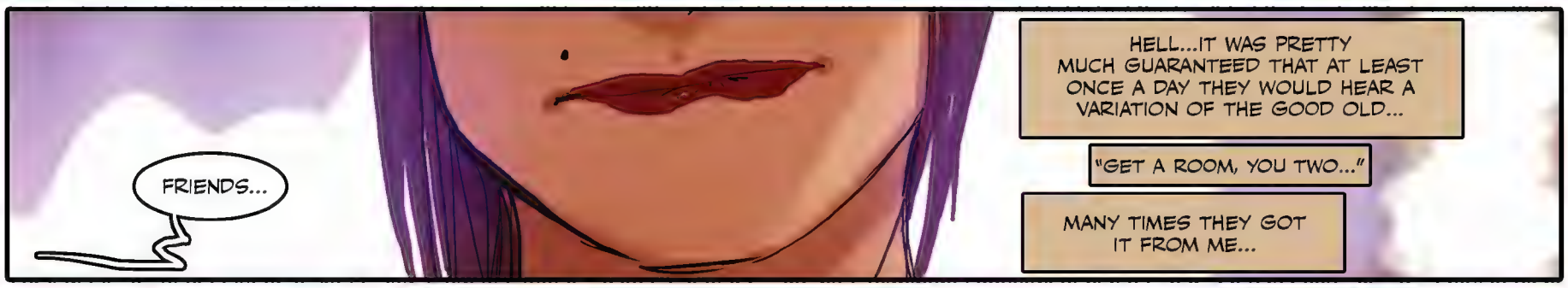
THEY WERE TOGETHER ALL THE DAMN TIME...
AS FRIENDS.

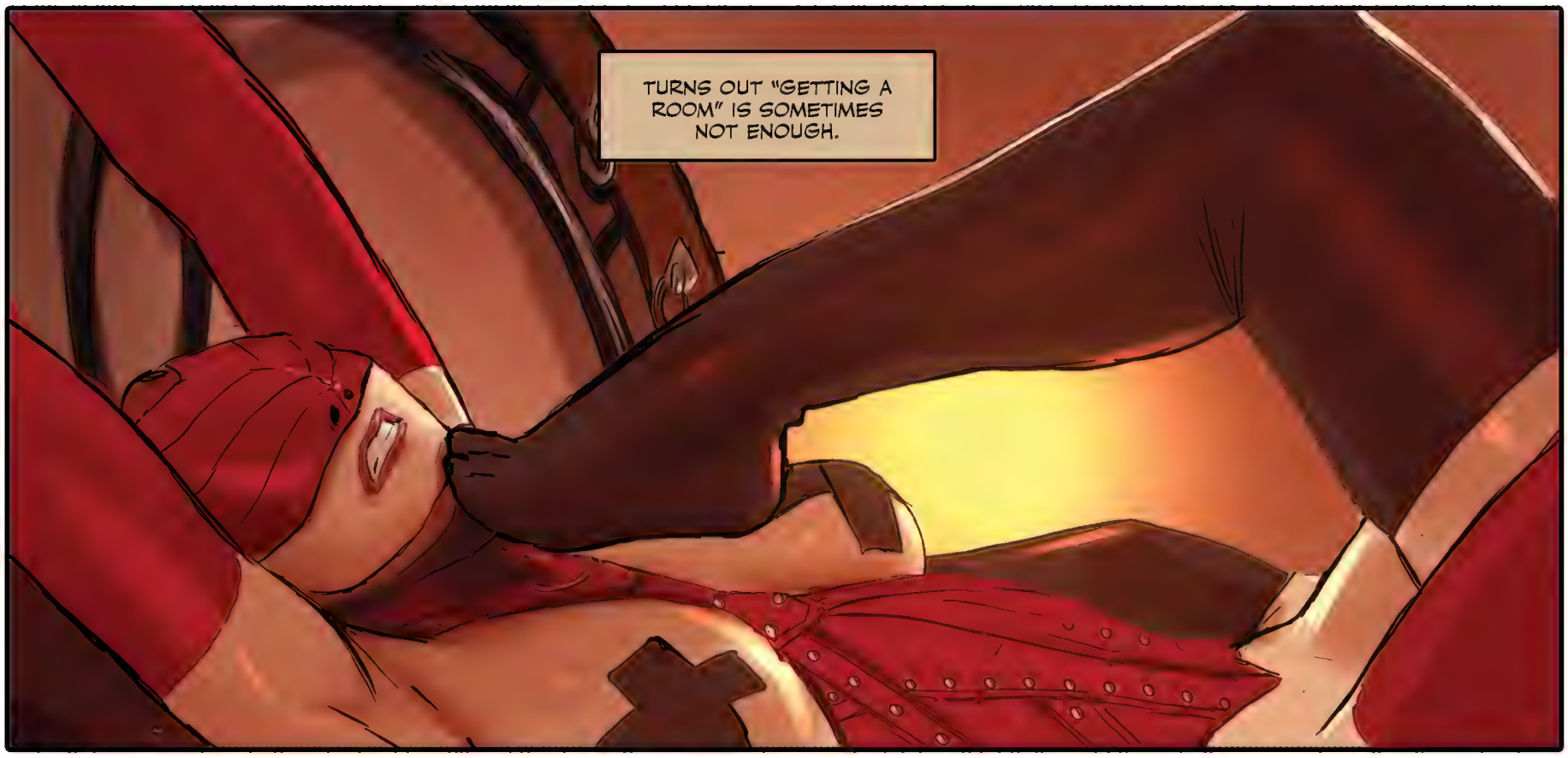

WENT TO THE MOVIES...
AS FRIENDS.

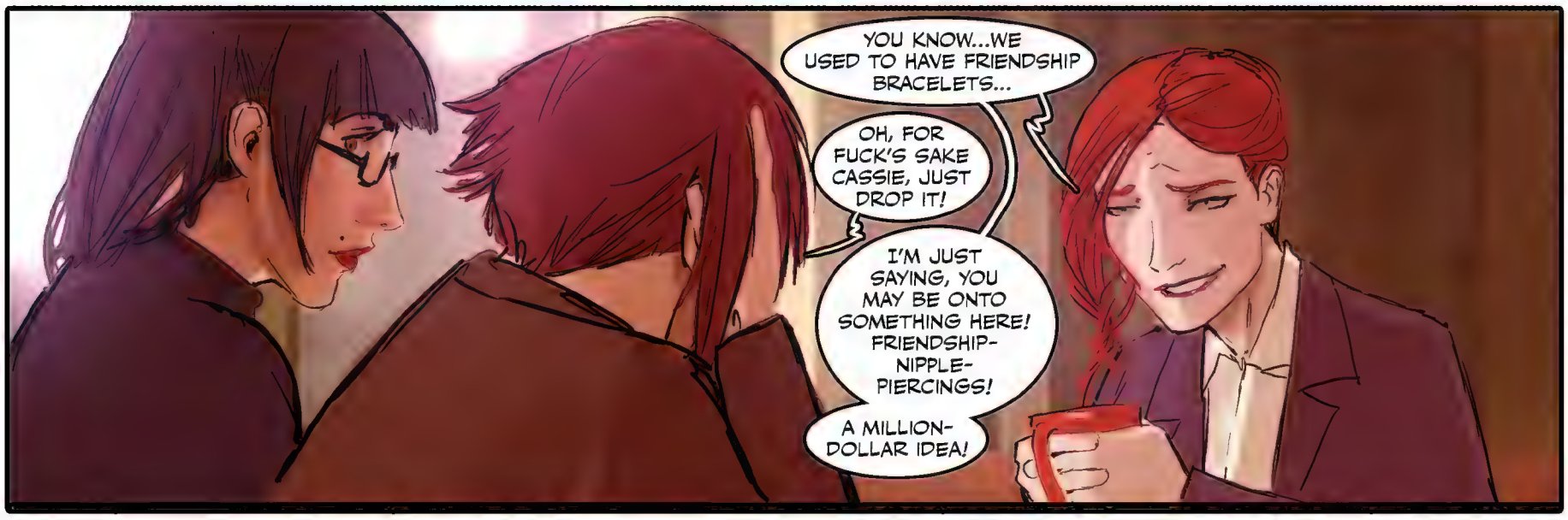

FREQUENTED RESTAURANTS...
AS FRIENDS.

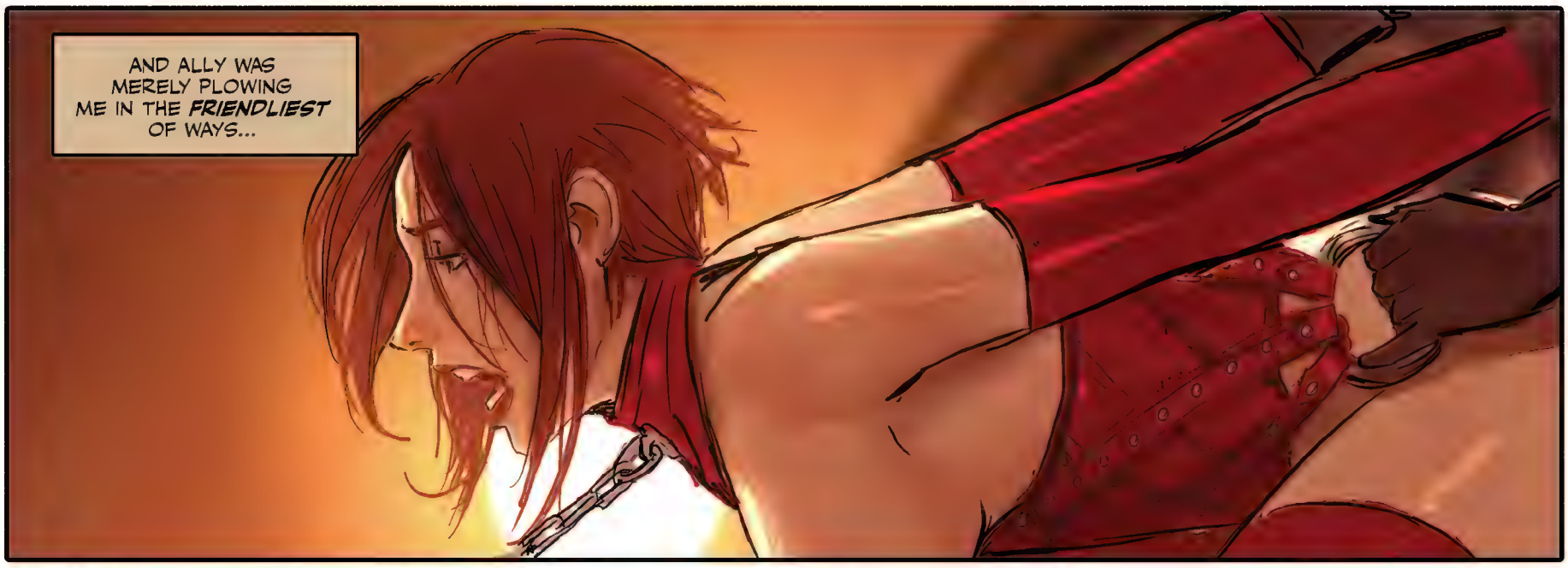

AND...I MEAN... IT WASN'T SUBTLE OR ANYTHING...
EVERYONE COULD SEE IT...
WOULD YOU PREFER OUR COUPLES' BOOTH?
WHAT? OH! NO, NO...WE'RE FRIENDS!
I APOLOGIZE! I SAW YOU HOLDING HANDS AND JUST ASSUMED...

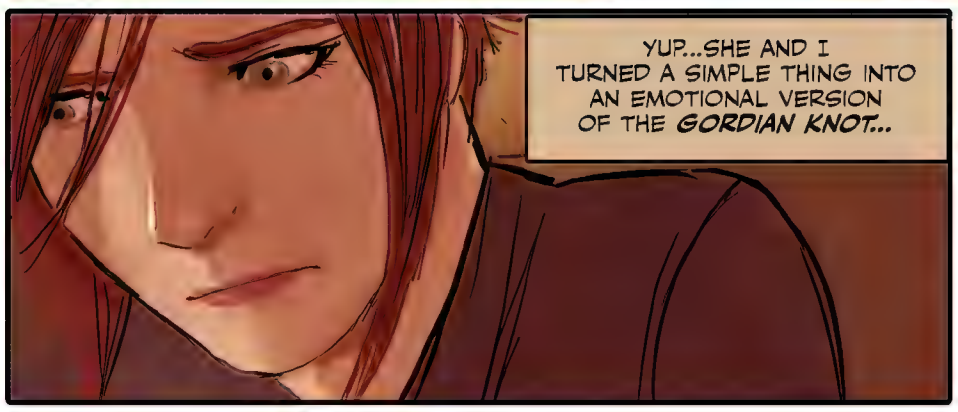
STILL, THEY KEPT DENYING IT.
NO...JUST BEST...

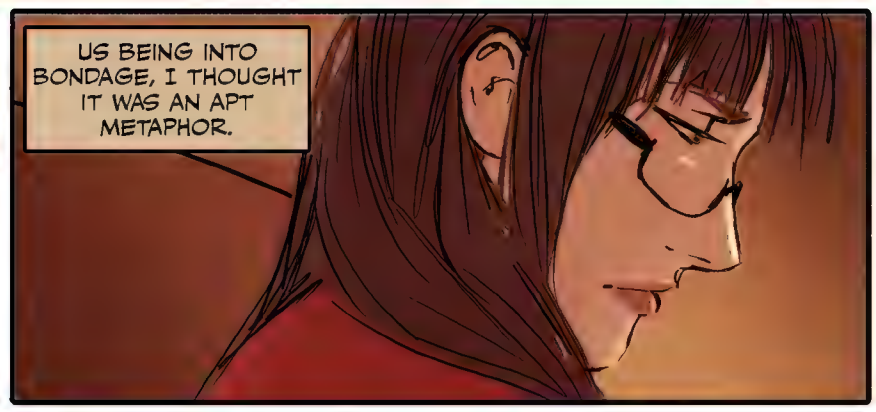

FRIENDS...
HELL...IT WAS PRETTY MUCH GUARANTEED THAT AT LEAST ONCE A DAY THEY WOULD HEAR A VARIATION OF THE GOOD OLD...
"GET A ROOM, YOU TWO..."
MANY TIMES THEY GOT IT FROM ME...

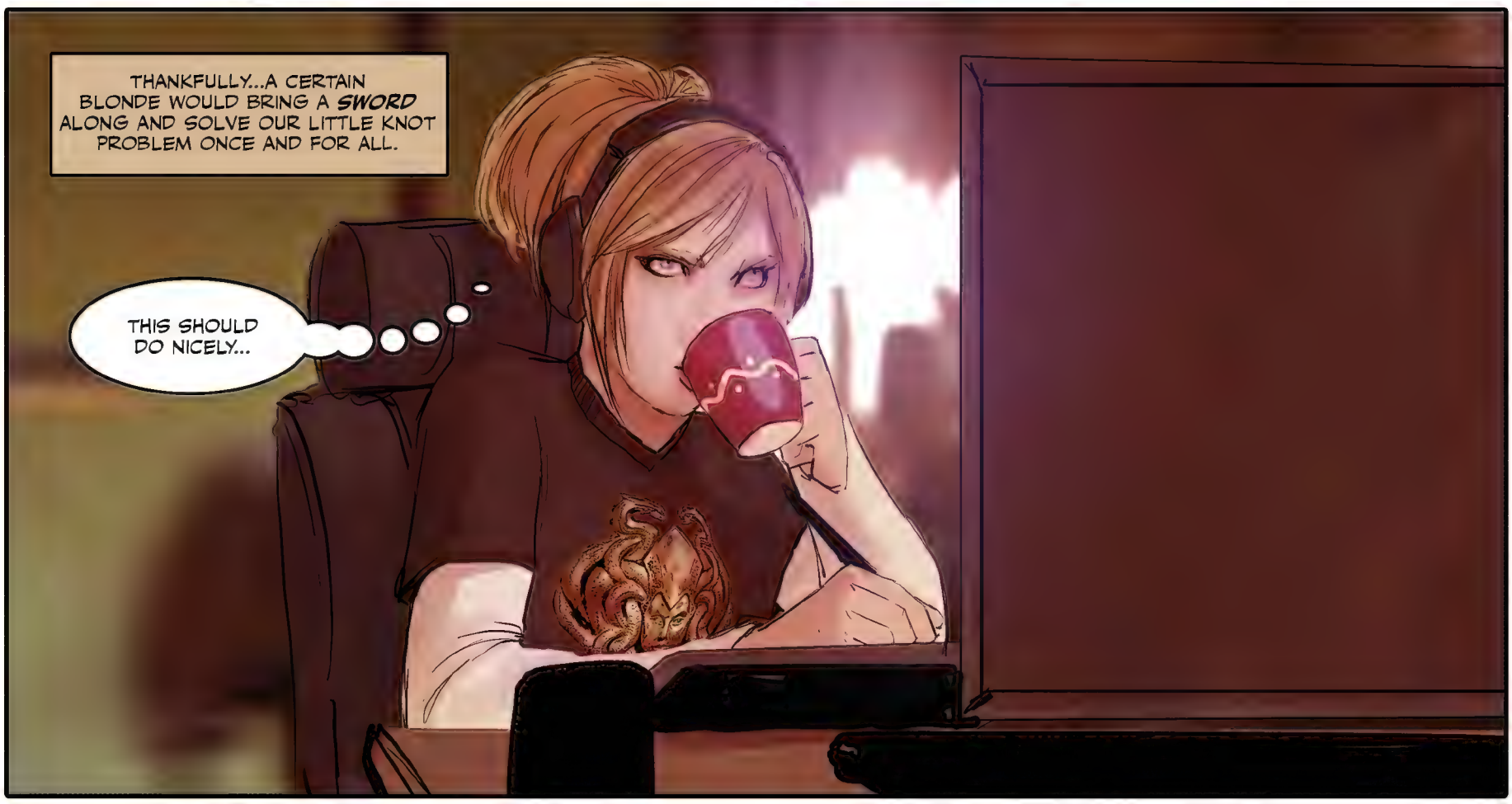

TURNS OUT "GETTING A ROOM" IS SOMETIMES NOT ENOUGH.

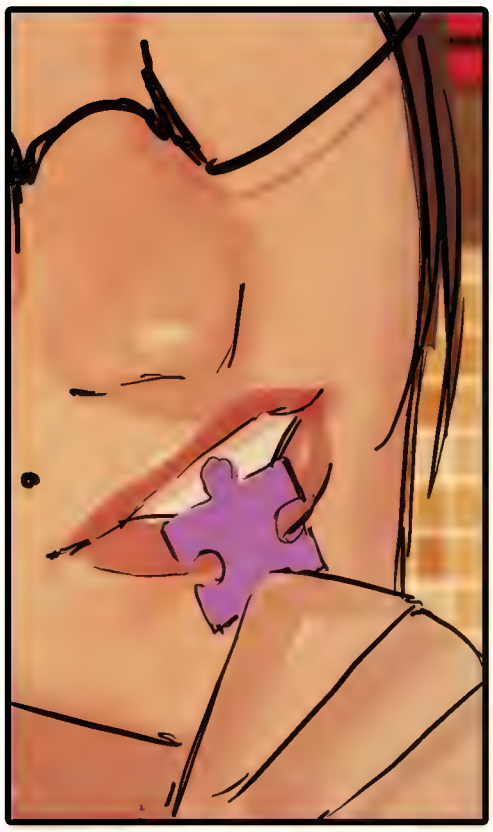

YOU KNOW...WE USED TO HAVE FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS...
OH, FOR FUCK'S SAKE CASSIE, JUST DROP IT!
I'M JUST SAYING, YOU MAY BE ONTO SOMETHING HERE! FRIENDSHIP-NIPPLE-PIERCINGS!
A MILLION-DOLLAR IDEA!


AND ALLY WAS MERELY PLOWING ME IN THE *FRIENDLIEST* OF WAYS...


YUP...SHE AND I TURNED A SIMPLE THING INTO AN EMOTIONAL VERSION OF THE *GORDIAN KNOT...*


US BEING INTO BONDAGE, I THOUGHT IT WAS AN APT METAPHOR.

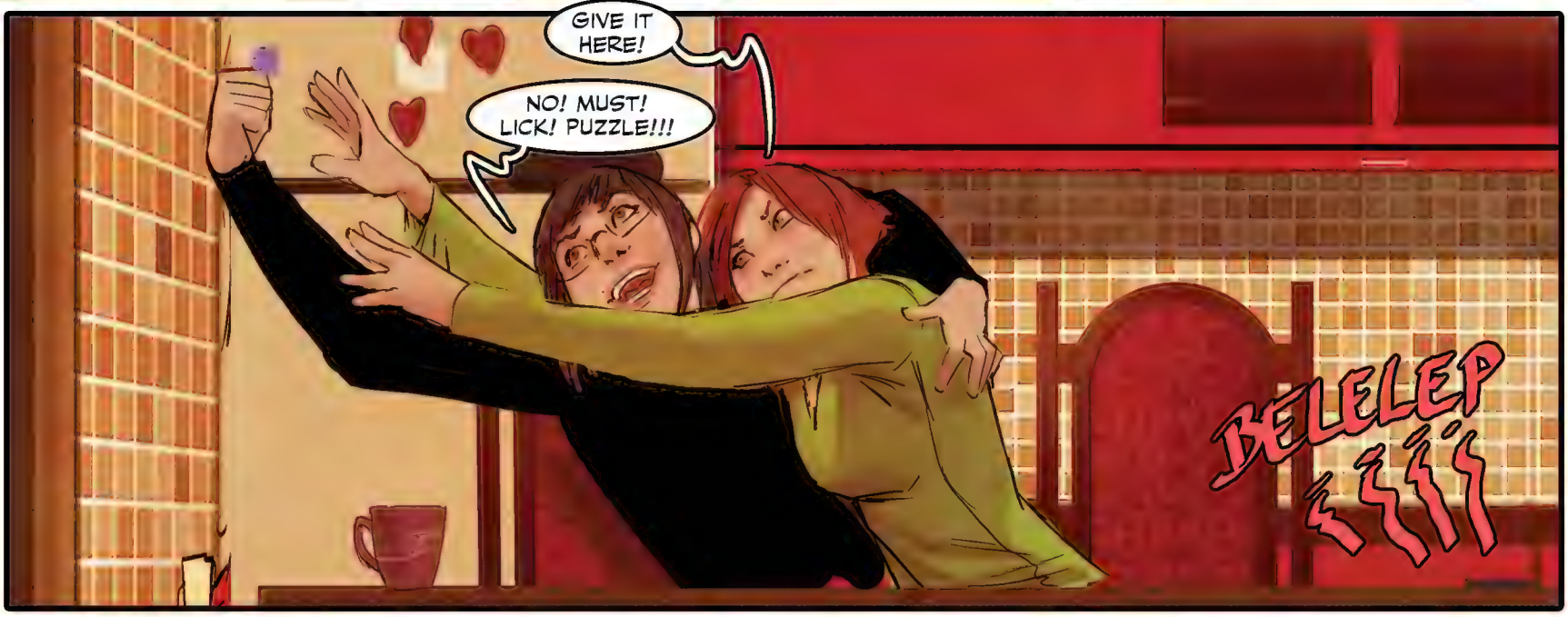

THANKFULLY...A CERTAIN BLONDE WOULD BRING A *SWORD* ALONG AND SOLVE OUR LITTLE KNOT PROBLEM ONCE AND FOR ALL.
THIS SHOULD DO NICELY...



HEY!

YOU MIND NOT DROOLING ALL OVER MY PUZZLE?
DROOLING?

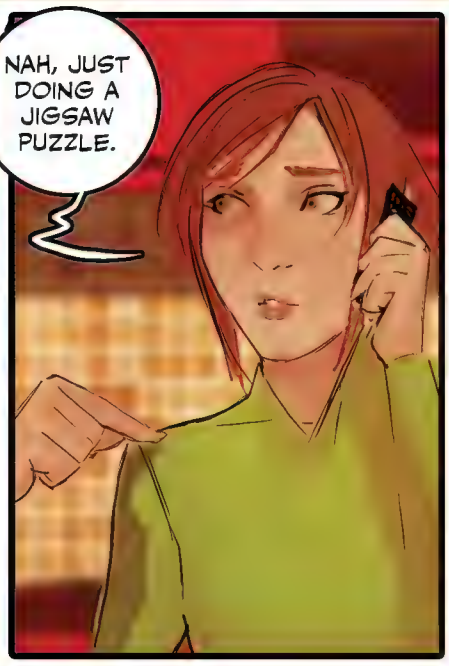
I'LL SHOW YOU DROOLING! I'LL LICK IT ALL OVER! MAKE IT NICE AND SOGGY!


GIVE IT HERE!
NO! MUST! LICK! PUZZLE!!!
BELELEP

TIME OUT!

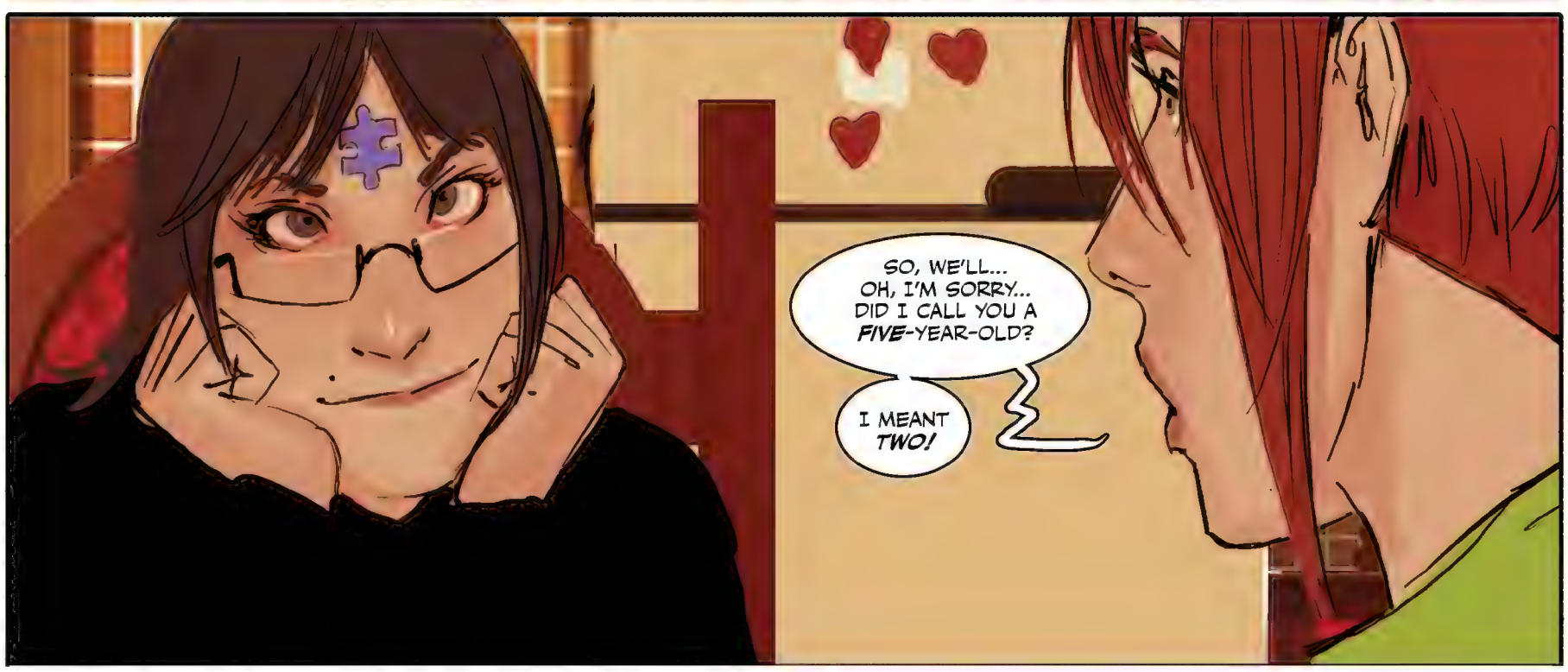
Y'ELLO?

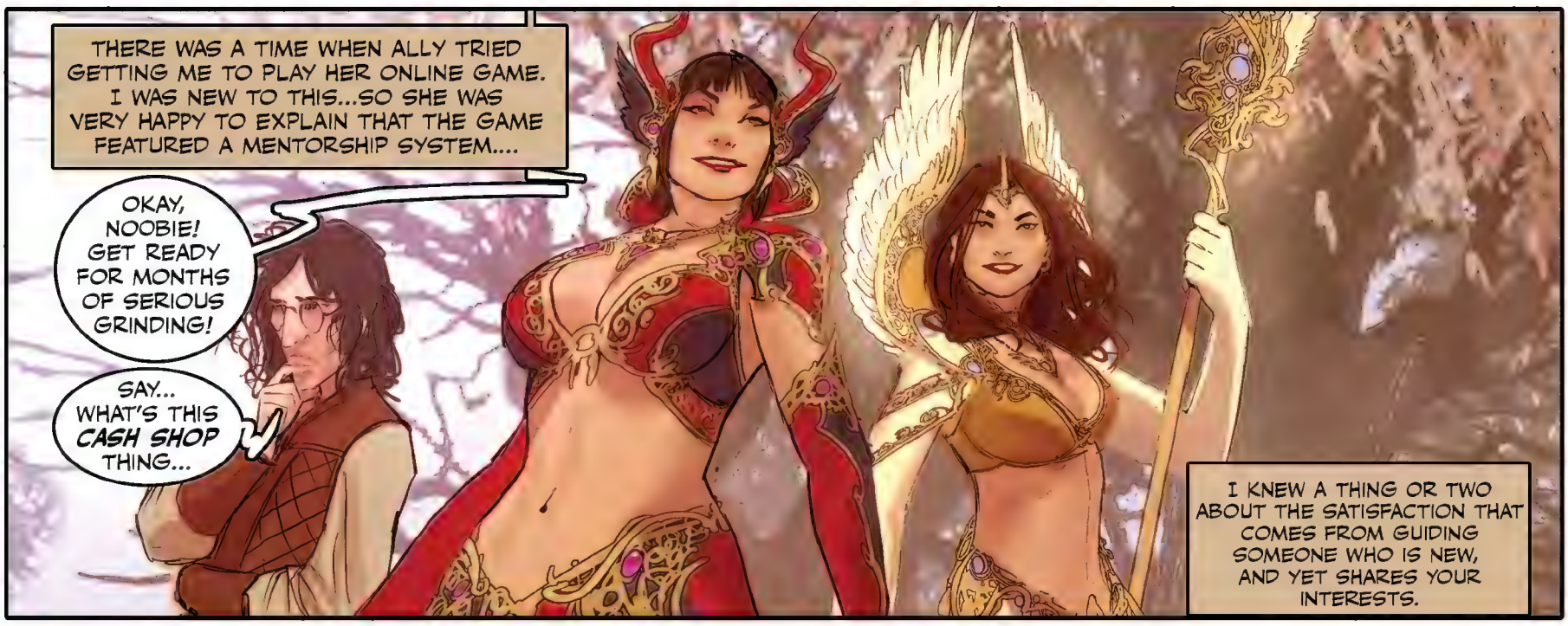
HEY ANNE!

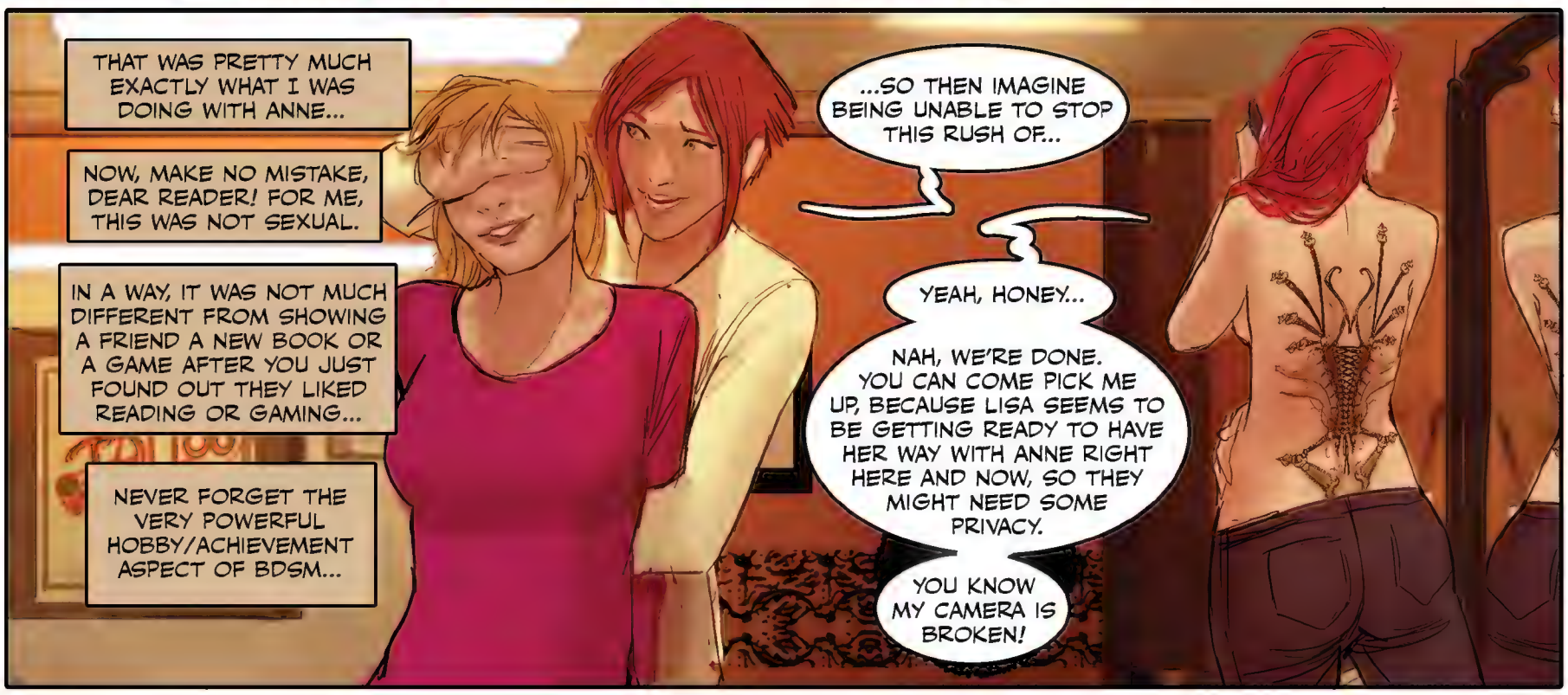

NAH, JUST DOING A JIGSAW PUZZLE.

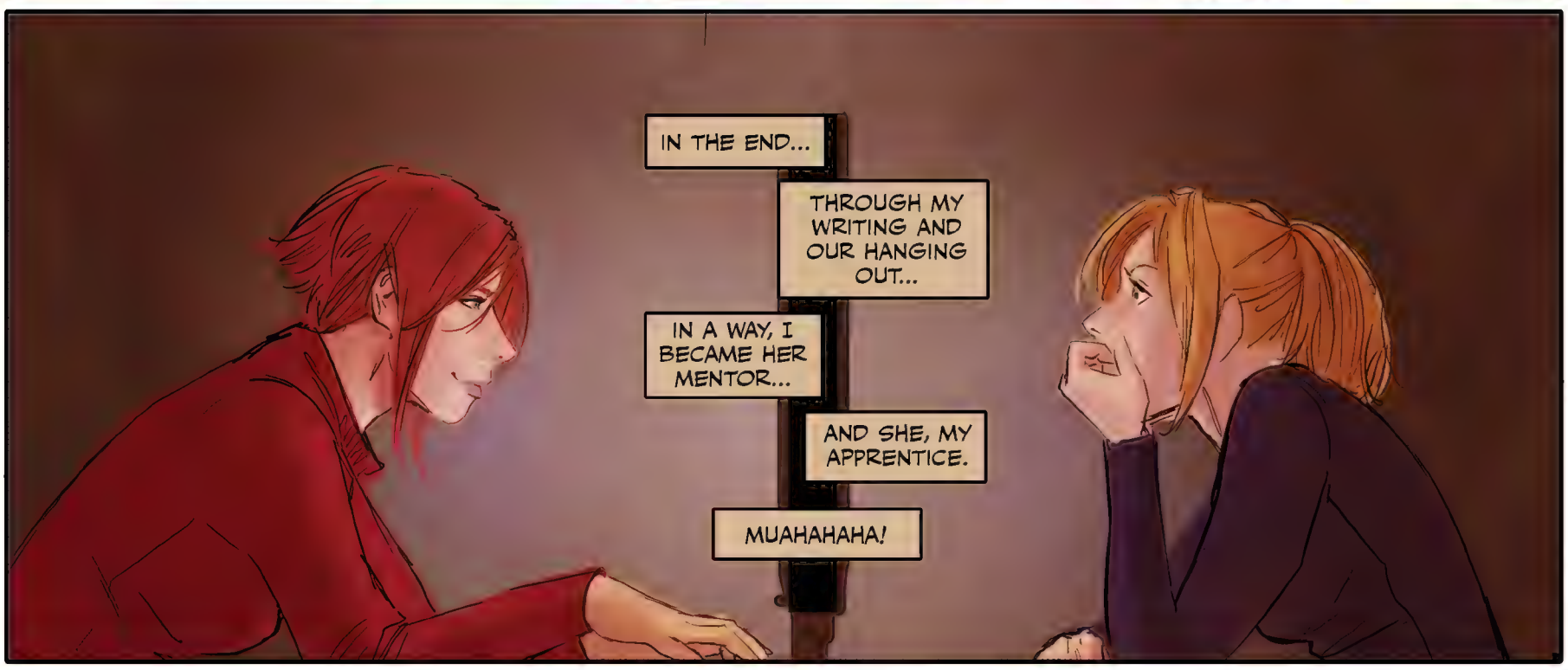
BLEEE!
WITH THE NEIGHBOR'S FIVE-YEAR-OLD APPARENTLY!

OH...THAT'S NICE! ANYHOO, I FINISHED YOUR TATTOO DESIGN.
REALLY?! WHEN CAN I SEE IT?
I'M OVERSCHEDULED TOMORROW SO... FRIDAY? MEET YOU FOR LUNCH?
AWESOME! I'LL DRAG ALLY ALONG, 'BOUT TIME THE TWO OF YOU MET!
SAY WHAT?
UMM...SURE!
OKAY, ANNE, SO HOW MUCH WILL IT COST SO I CAN GET...
NOTHING! THINK OF IT AS A PERMANENT THANK YOU NOTE FOR THE FUN READING MATERIALS.
D'AWWWW WITTWE PERWO WIKEF MY WRITING!
POT...KETTLE? ANYHOO, GOTTA GO NOW, SEE YOU GUYS IN TWO DAYS.
SEE YA!

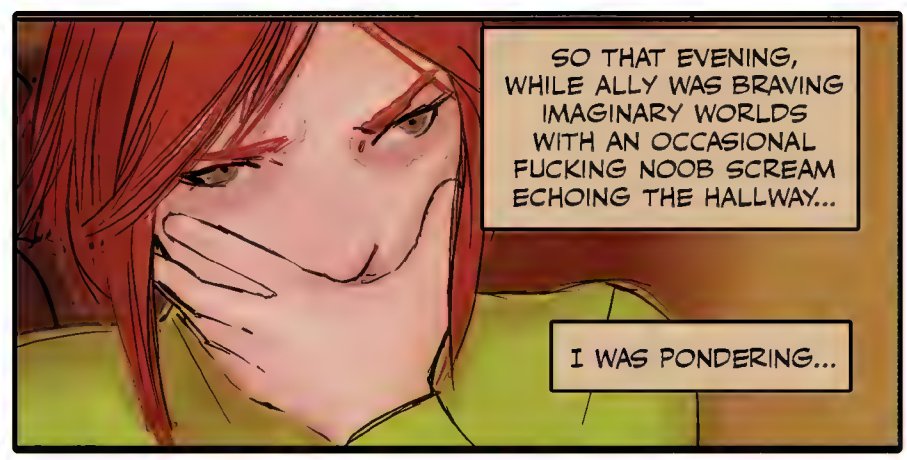

SO, WE'LL... OH, I'M SORRY... DID I CALL YOU A FIVE-YEAR-OLD?
I MEANT TWO!

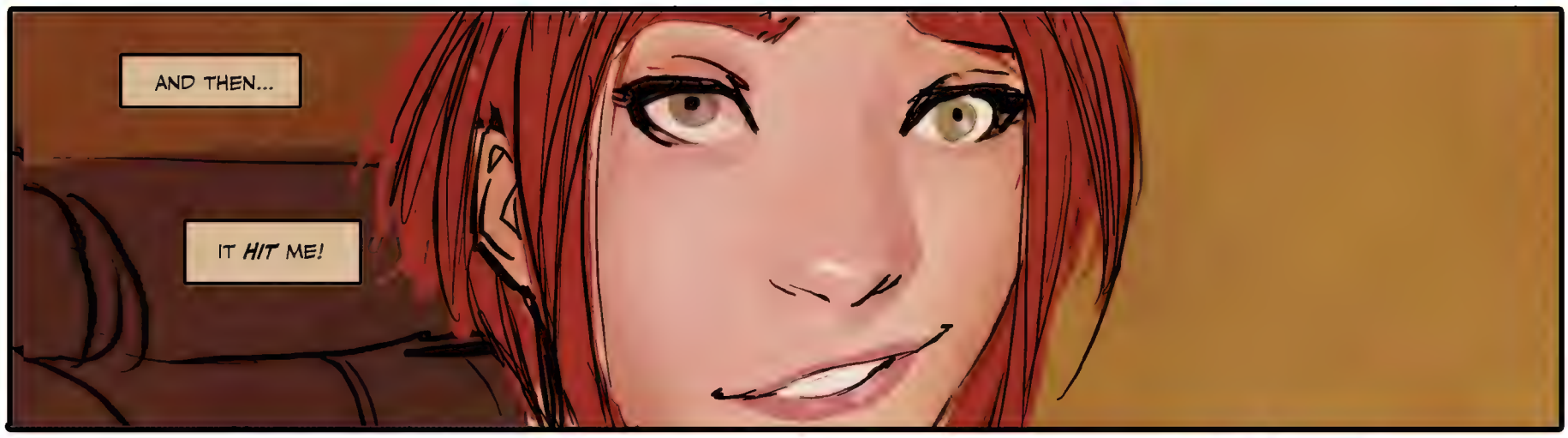

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN ALLY TRIED GETTING ME TO PLAY HER ONLINE GAME. I WAS NEW TO THIS...SO SHE WAS VERY HAPPY TO EXPLAIN THAT THE GAME FEATURED A MENTORSHIP SYSTEM....
OKAY, NOOBIE! GET READY FOR MONTHS OF SERIOUS GRINDING!
SAY... WHAT'S THIS CASH SHOP THING...
I KNEW A THING OR TWO ABOUT THE SATISFACTION THAT COMES FROM GUIDING SOMEONE WHO IS NEW, AND YET SHARES YOUR INTERESTS.


THAT WAS PRETTY MUCH EXACTLY WHAT I WAS DOING WITH ANNE...
NOW, MAKE NO MISTAKE, DEAR READER! FOR ME, THIS WAS NOT SEXUAL.
IN A WAY, IT WAS NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM SHOWING A FRIEND A NEW BOOK OR A GAME AFTER YOU JUST FOUND OUT THEY LIKED READING OR GAMING...
NEVER FORGET THE VERY POWERFUL HOBBY/ACHIEVEMENT ASPECT OF BDSM...
...SO THEN IMAGINE BEING UNABLE TO STOP THIS RUSH OF...
YEAH, HONEY...
NAH, WE'RE DONE. YOU CAN COME PICK ME UP, BECAUSE LISA SEEMS TO BE GETTING READY TO HAVE HER WAY WITH ANNE RIGHT HERE AND NOW, SO THEY MIGHT NEED SOME PRIVACY.
YOU KNOW MY CAMERA IS BROKEN!


IN THE END...
THROUGH MY WRITING AND OUR HANGING OUT...
IN A WAY, I BECAME HER MENTOR...
AND SHE, MY APPRENTICE.
MUAHAHAHA!

AHEM...ANYWAY, I COULDN'T JUST LET HER DO THIS TATTOO FOR NOTHING.


SO THAT EVENING, WHILE ALLY WAS BRAVING IMAGINARY WORLDS WITH AN OCCASIONAL FUCKING NOOB SCREAM ECHOING THE HALLWAY...
I WAS PONDERING...



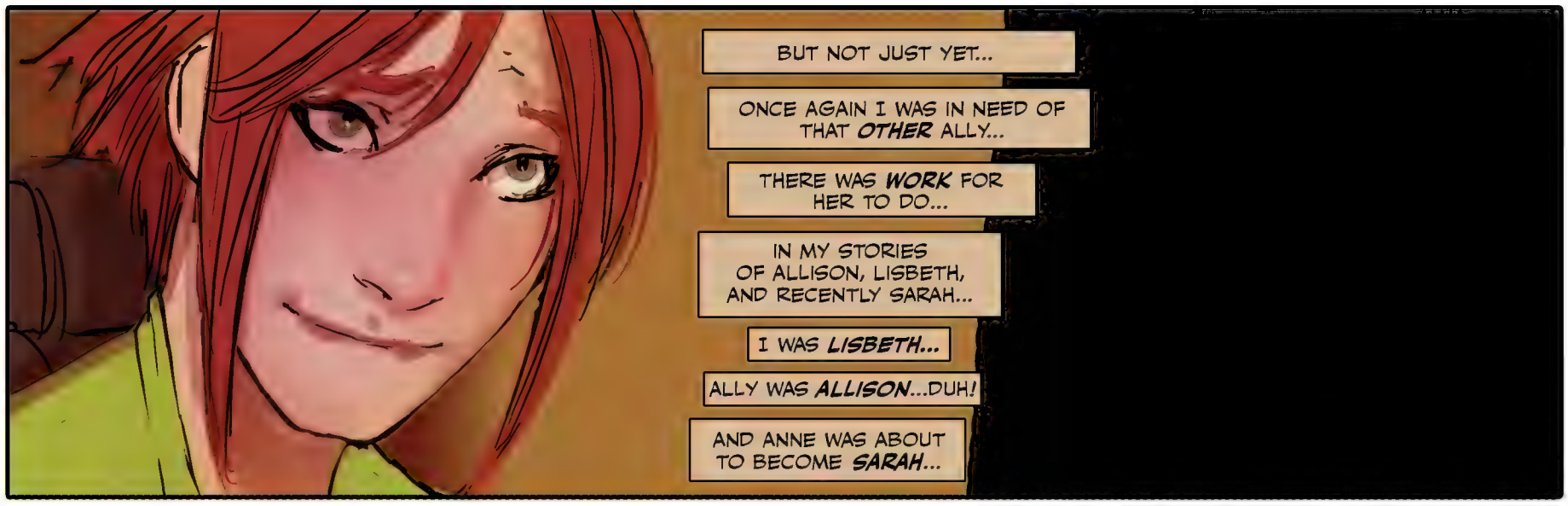
I KNOW YOU SAID YOU'LL DO THE TATTOO FOR FREE...BUT I STILL FEEL LIKE I SHOULD DO SOMETHING FOR YOU AS WELL..

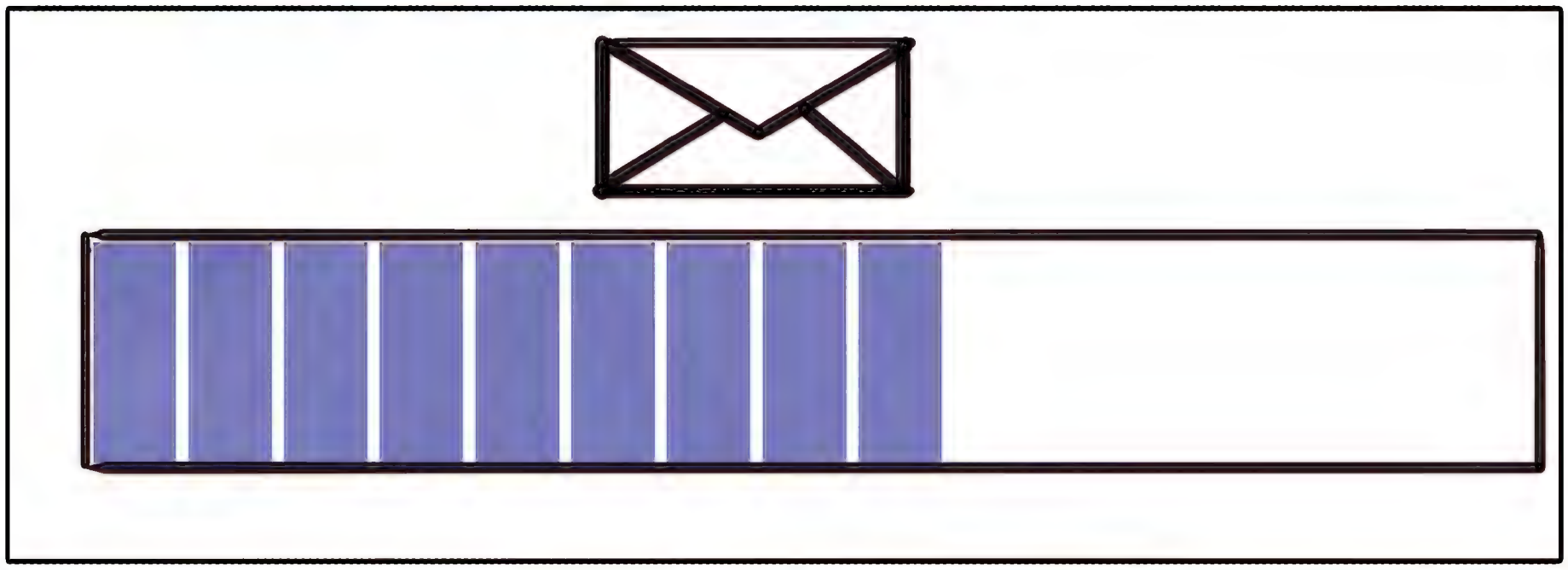
SO HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IF I USED YOU FOR ONE OF MY STORIES?

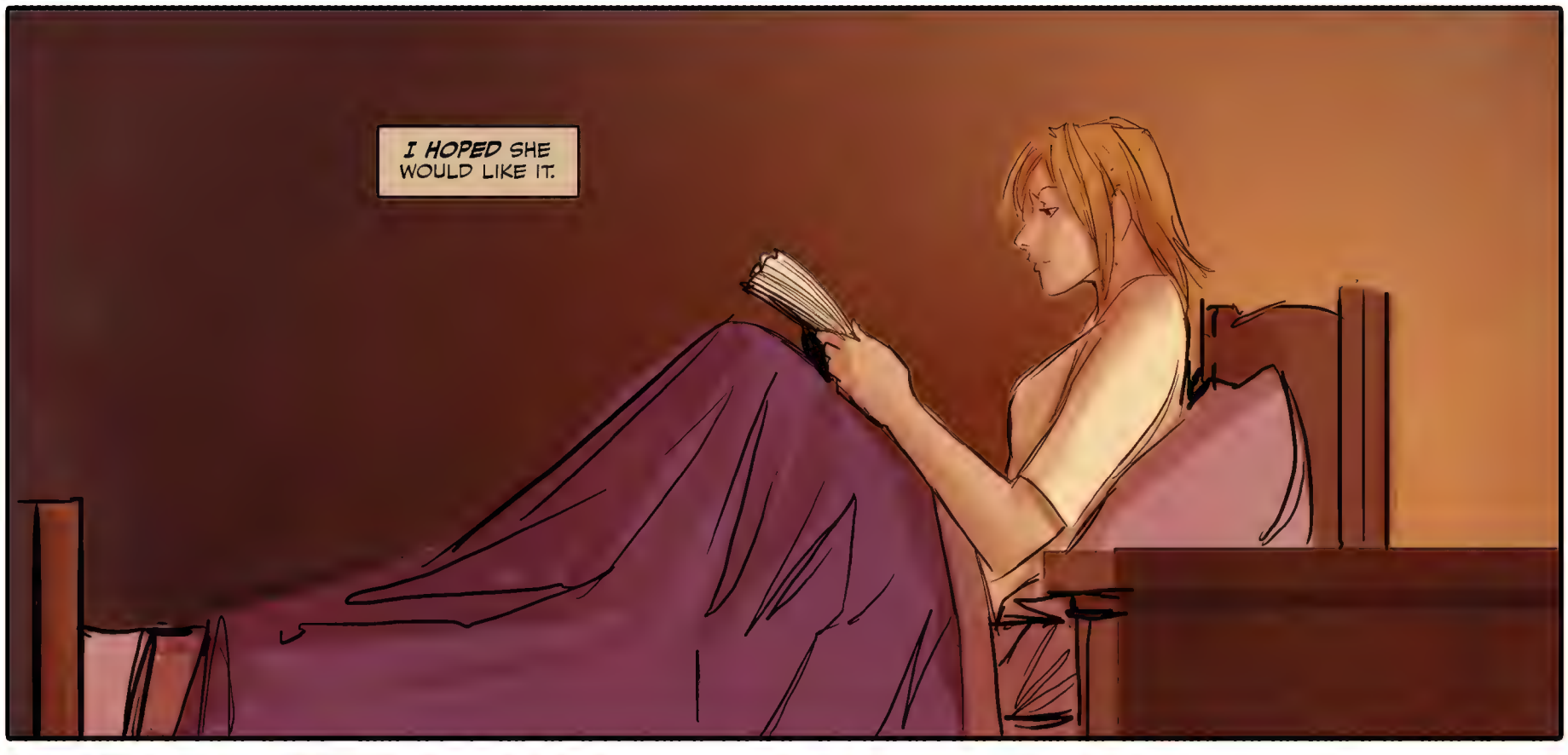
OF COURSE, YOU WOULD GET ALL THE VETO POWER AND EDITORIAL CONTROL AS WELL AS FIRST READING PRIVILEGE!

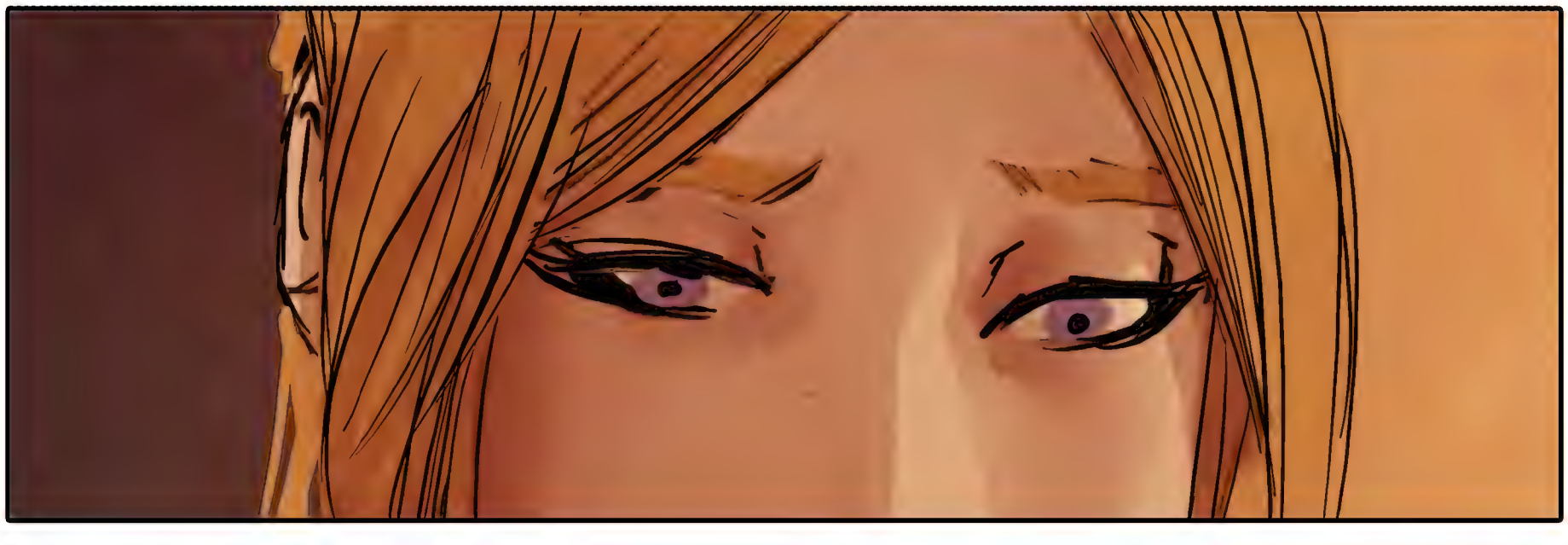
GET TO TYPING!

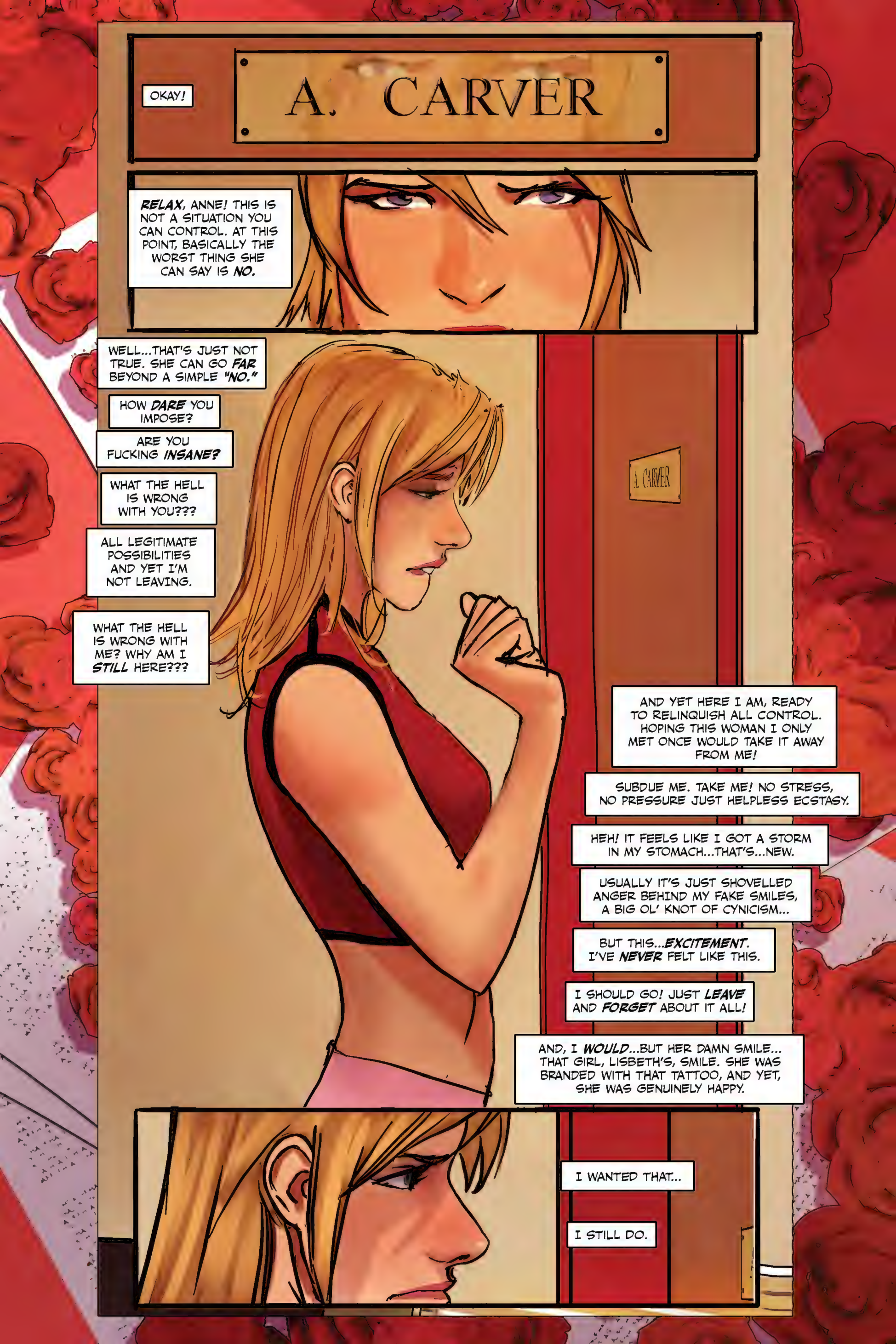
HEY ALLY...HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF I USED YOU AS THE DOMINATRIX IN MY NEXT STORY? OF COURSE, YOU WOULD BE THE FIRST TO READ IT...AND IF YOU SAY NO, THAT WILL BE THE END OF THAT, NO POSTING.
:)
START TYPING! BEFORE I GET MY PADDLE... XD
YES, MISTRESS! :P
THAT WAS HOW THE FIRST OF MANY STORIES OF ALLISON AND LISBETH STARTED...
IN THESE STORIES I HAVE SHOWN THE ALLY OF MY DESIRES...DOMINANT, POWERFUL, GORGEOUS, AND WILD...
SHE WAS THE ALLY I WANTED...THE ALLY I LUSTED FOR...AND, EVENTUALLY, I MET THAT ALLY FACE-TO-FACE.
I FELT HER TOUCHES AND SCRATCHES... HER KISSES AND BITES...
THIS WAS THE ALLY I WROTE ABOUT.
THIS, HOWEVER, WAS NOT THE ALLY I WAS FALLING IN LOVE WITH...
NO. THAT ALLY WAS A DUMBASS STICKING PUZZLES TO HER FOREHEAD.
I WANTED TO TELL THAT DUMBASS HOW MUCH I LOVED HER...

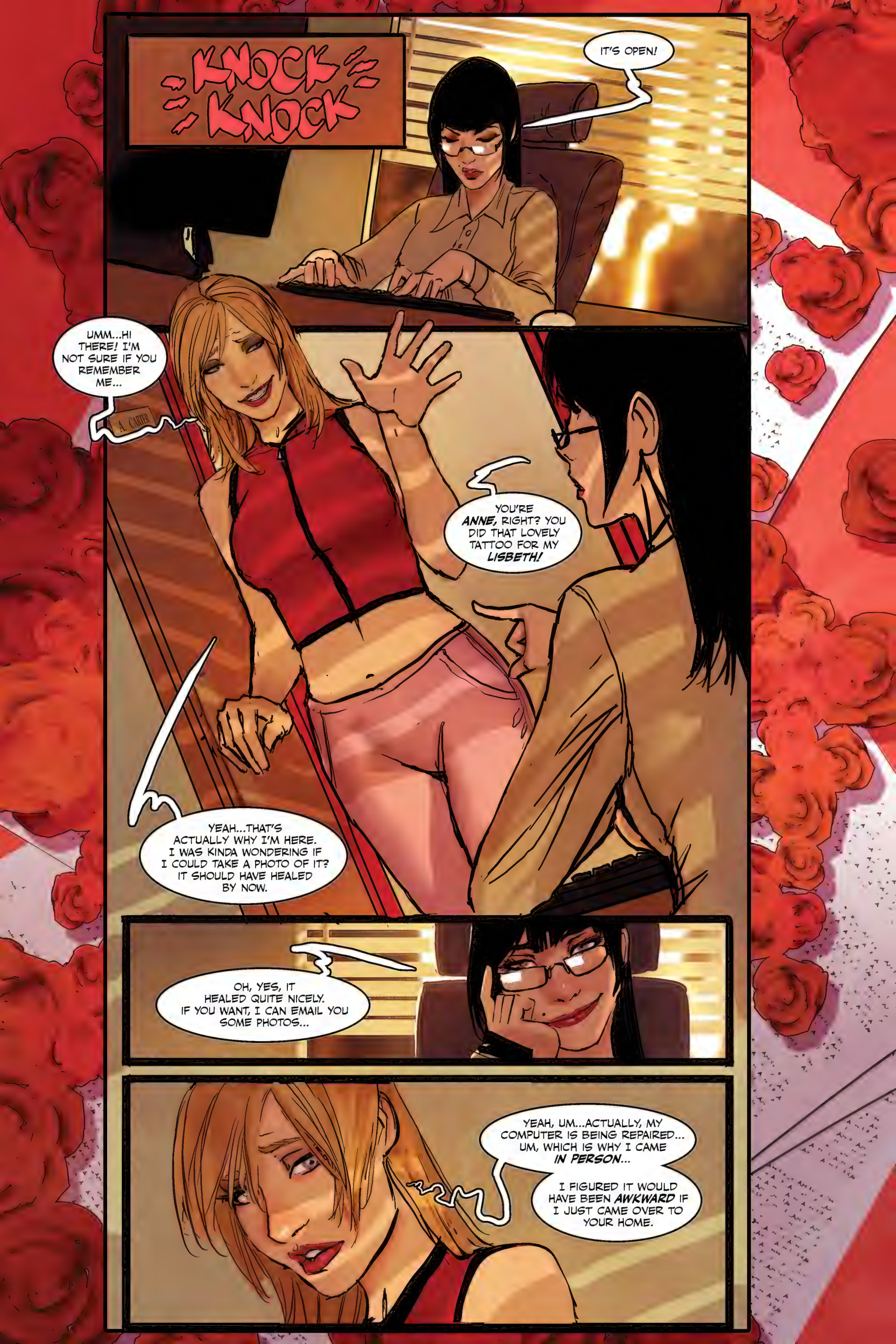

BUT NOT JUST YET...
ONCE AGAIN I WAS IN NEED OF THAT OTHER ALLY...
THERE WAS WORK FOR HER TO DO...
IN MY STORIES OF ALLISON, LISBETH, AND RECENTLY SARAH...
I WAS LISBETH...
ALLY WAS ALLISON...DUH!
AND ANNE WAS ABOUT TO BECOME SARAH...




I HOPED SHE WOULD LIKE IT.

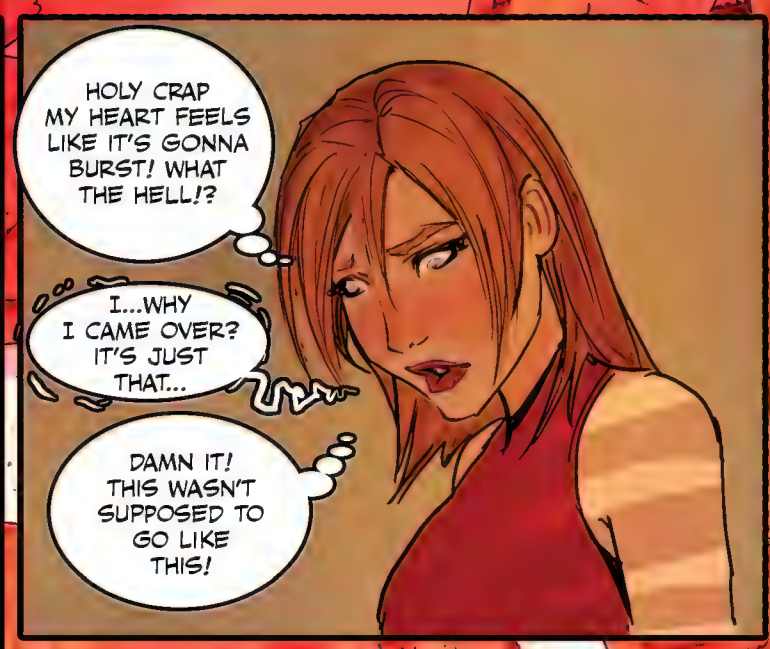


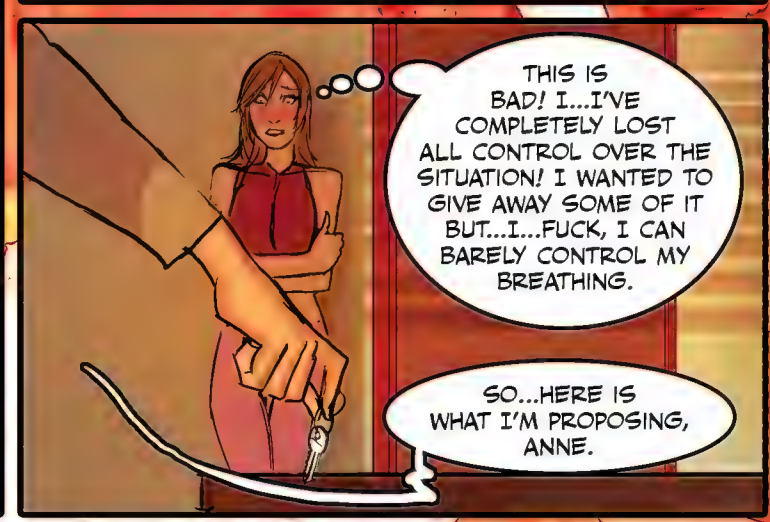

OKAY!
A. CARVER
RELAX, ANNE! THIS IS NOT A SITUATION YOU CAN CONTROL. AT THIS POINT, BASICALLY THE WORST THING SHE CAN SAY IS NO.
WELL...THAT'S JUST NOT TRUE. SHE CAN GO FAR BEYOND A SIMPLE "NO."
HOW DARE YOU IMPOSE?
ARE YOU FUCKING INSANE?
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU???
ALL LEGITIMATE POSSIBILITIES AND YET I'M NOT LEAVING.
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH ME? WHY AM I STILL HERE???
A. CARVER
AND YET HERE I AM, READY TO RELINQUISH ALL CONTROL. HOPING THIS WOMAN I ONLY MET ONCE WOULD TAKE IT AWAY FROM ME!
SUBDUE ME. TAKE ME! NO STRESS, NO PRESSURE JUST HELPLESS ECSTASY.
HEH! IT FEELS LIKE I GOT A STORM IN MY STOMACH...THAT'S...NEW.
USUALLY IT'S JUST SHOVELLED ANGER BEHIND MY FAKE SMILES, A BIG OL' KNOT OF CYNICISM...
BUT THIS...EXCITEMENT. I'VE NEVER FELT LIKE THIS.
I SHOULD GO! JUST LEAVE AND FORGET ABOUT IT ALL!
AND, I WOULD...BUT HER DAMN SMILE... THAT GIRL, LISBETH'S, SMILE. SHE WAS BRANDED WITH THAT TATTOO, AND YET, SHE WAS GENUINELY HAPPY.
I WANTED THAT...
I STILL DO.

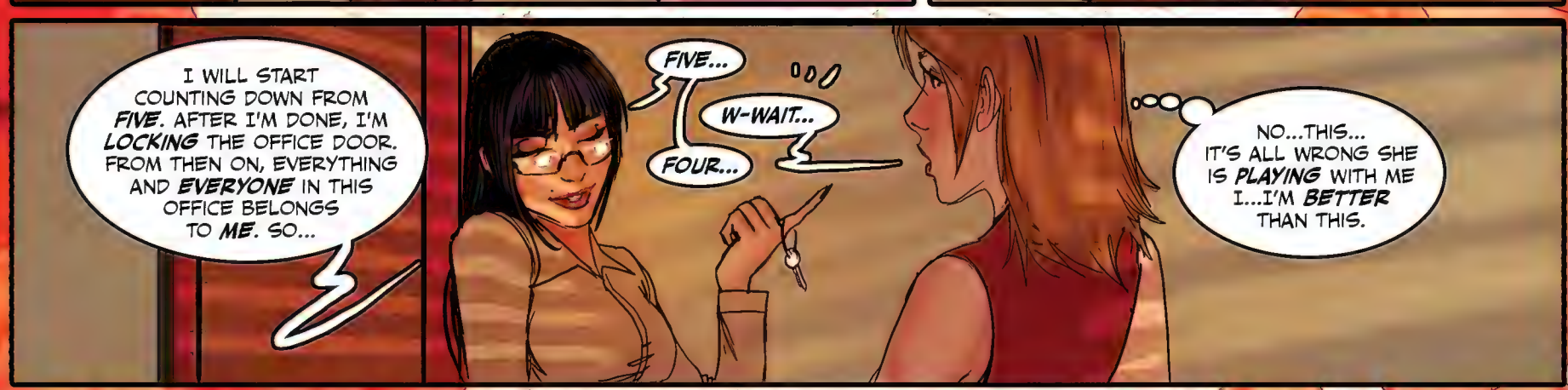

KNOCK KNOCK
IT'S OPEN!
UMM...HI THERE! I'M NOT SURE IF YOU REMEMBER ME...
A. CARTER
YOU'RE ANNE, RIGHT? YOU DID THAT LOVELY TATTOO FOR MY LISBETH!
YEAH...THAT'S ACTUALLY WHY I'M HERE. I WAS KINDA WONDERING IF I COULD TAKE A PHOTO OF IT? IT SHOULD HAVE HEALED BY NOW.
OH, YES, IT HEALED QUITE NICELY. IF YOU WANT, I CAN EMAIL YOU SOME PHOTOS...
YEAH, UM...ACTUALLY, MY COMPUTER IS BEING REPAIRED... UM, WHICH IS WHY I CAME IN PERSON...
I FIGURED IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AWKWARD IF I JUST CAME OVER TO YOUR HOME.

DON'T BE SILLY, MY LOVELY LISBETH WOULD HAVE LET YOU IN, AND HELPED YOU OUT GLADLY!
I SEE...SOOO... LISBETH AND YOU ARE LIVING TOGETHER?
YEEES?
RIGHT...
SO...YOU ARE LIKE, A REAL DOMINATRIX?
SORRY, WHAT?
WELL...I MEAN, I DON'T WANT TO PRY...IT'S JUST... LISBETH'S COLLAR, HER TATTOO...
YOU SURE ARE AN OBSERVANT ONE.
HEH... TATTOOING IS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY... YOU PICK UP ON STUFF.
UH-HUH...
PLUS, I'VE BEEN...I DON'T KNOW, CURIOUS ABOUT THAT STUFF...I GUESS.
HOLD THE PHONE...WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?
ANNE...
THERE IS NO WAY...
WHY DID YOU REALLY COME HERE?
W-WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I...I JUST CAME TO ASK ABOUT LISBETH'S TATTOO.
ARE YOU SURE?
WELL...I...

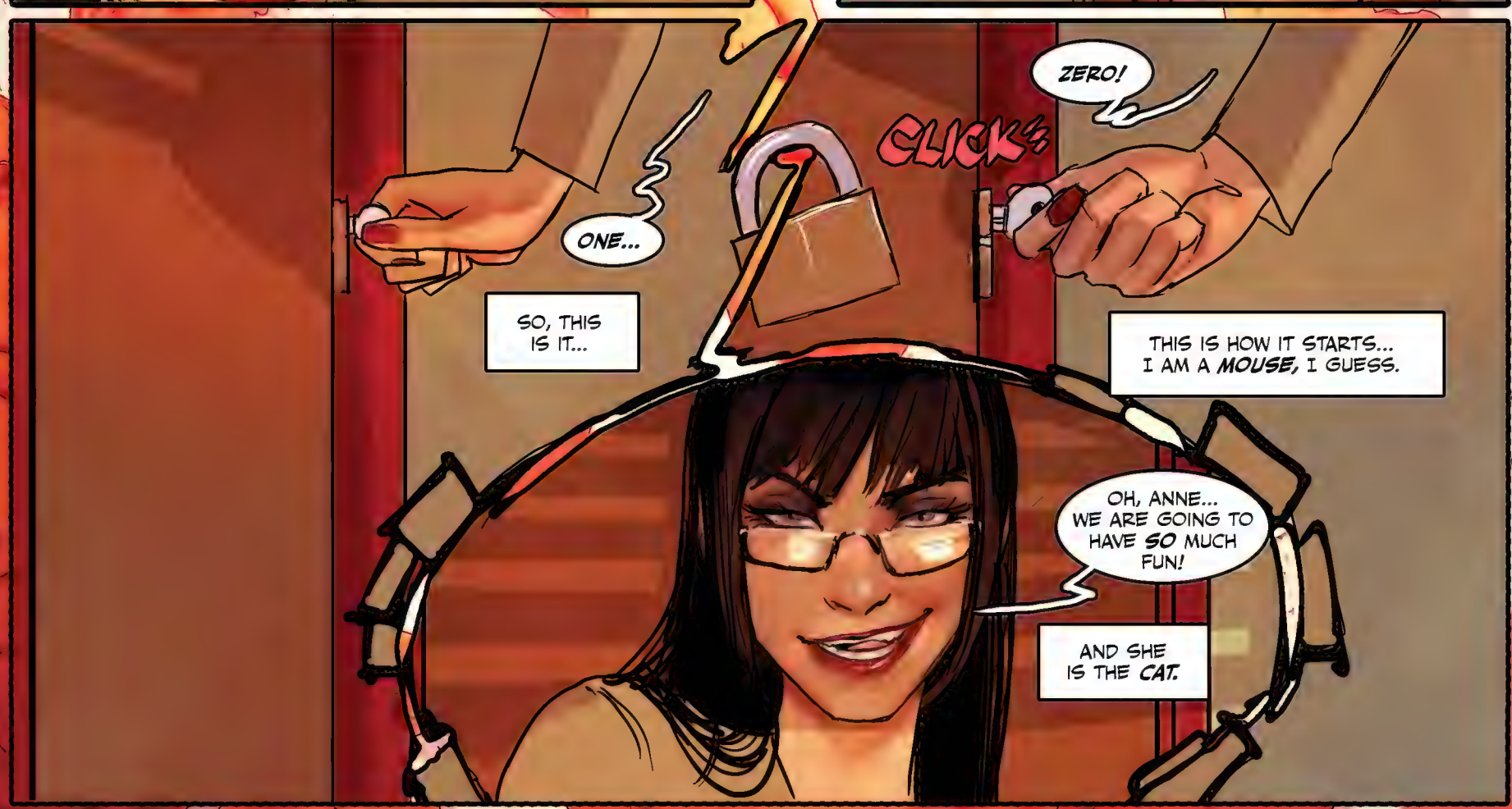
ANNE... IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU CAME HERE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING...COULD IT BE THAT OUR LITTLE... COMMISSION LEFT YOU WANTING FOR A MORE...LONG TERM COOPERATION?
W...WHAT?


HOLY CRAP MY HEART FEELS LIKE IT'S GONNA BURST! WHAT THE HELL!?
I...WHY I CAME OVER? IT'S JUST THAT...
DAMN IT! THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED TO GO LIKE THIS!


THIS IS BAD! I...I'VE COMPLETELY LOST ALL CONTROL OVER THE SITUATION! I WANTED TO GIVE AWAY SOME OF IT BUT...I...FUCK, I CAN BARELY CONTROL MY BREATHING.
SO...HERE IS WHAT I'M PROPOSING, ANNE.

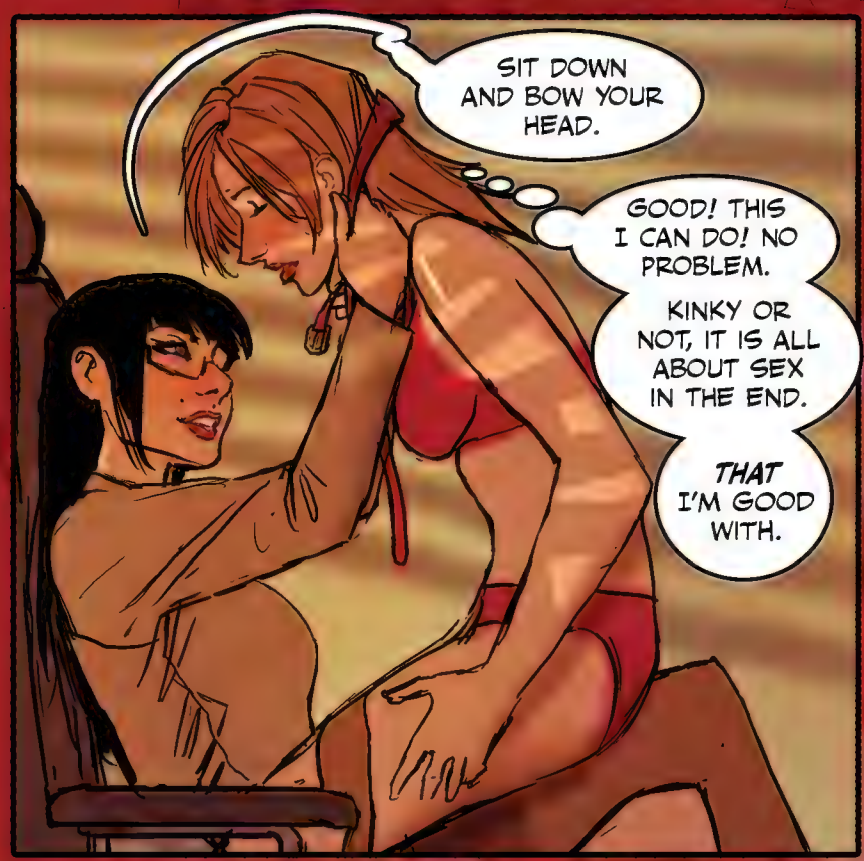

I WILL START COUNTING DOWN FROM FIVE. AFTER I'M DONE, I'M LOCKING THE OFFICE DOOR. FROM THEN ON, EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE IN THIS OFFICE BELONGS TO ME. SO...
FIVE...
W-WAIT...
FOUR...
NO...THIS... IT'S ALL WRONG SHE IS PLAYING WITH ME I...I'M BETTER THAN THIS.

THREE...
MY GOD... I...I'M NOT LEAVING! WHY AM I NOT LEAVING? I CAN BARELY BREATHE AND YET...I'M... STAYING!
TWO...


ZERO!
CLICK!
ONE...
SO, THIS IS IT...
THIS IS HOW IT STARTS... I AM A MOUSE, I GUESS.
OH, ANNE... WE ARE GOING TO HAVE SO MUCH FUN!
AND SHE IS THE CAT.

OH FUCK! THIS IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING I'M IN HERE, LOCKED WITH HER! I'M NOT A CLAUSTROPHOBIC PERSON BUT...IT'S AS IF I'M WEARING A CORSET THAT WAS LACED TOO TIGHT.
LIKE MY LUNGS CAN'T EXPAND AND I'M COMPENSATING...
DAMN IT! WHY CAN'T I BREATHE NORMALLY?
START UNDRESSING, MY PET, THIS GAME WILL REQUIRE LESS CLOTHING.
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE SHE IS PHYSICALLY THREATENING. SHE IS HOT, THAT'S ABOUT IT...
SO, WHY CAN I ACTUALLY HEAR MY OWN HEART BEATING WILD IN MY EARS?
I...I WANTED IN ON THIS GAME. I WANTED IT BADLY! SO WHY DO I FEEL SO...
CORNERED! THAT'S IT! I FEEL CORNERED!
CRAP...I REALLY AM A MOUSE!
SAY SOMETHING!
SHOULD I SPEAK? NO! WITH MY BREATHING AS IT IS I WOULD PROBABLY JUST SQUEAK LIKE A MOUSE.
DAMN YOU, SAY SOMETHING!!!
I...I'VE COMPLETELY LOST ALL CONTROL.
WELL...I MEAN...
I...I COULD STILL LEAVE.
GIVE UP ON THIS CRAZY FASCINATION...

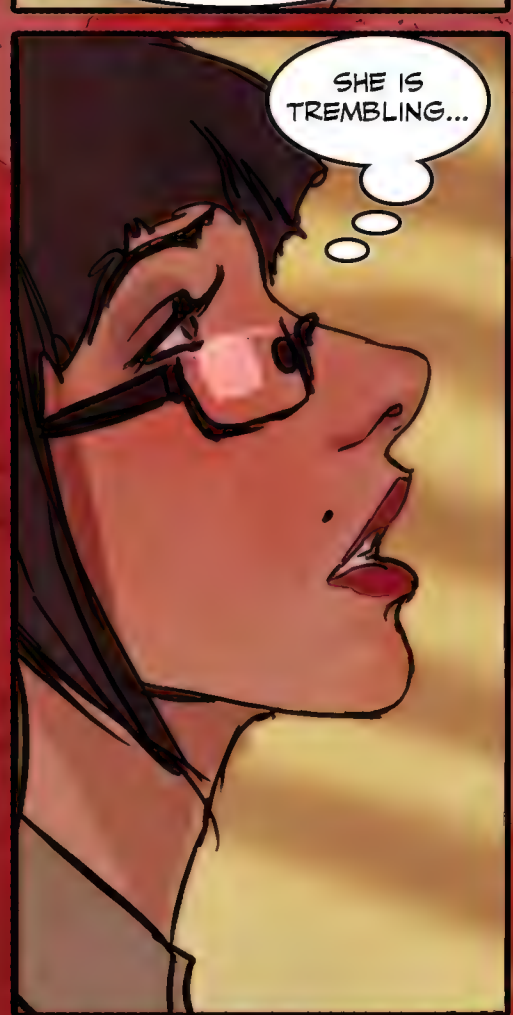
BUT, HER SMILE... SHE IS NOT PRETENDING.
SHE IS TRULY ENJOYING THIS, JUST LIKE LISBETH DID.
THEY HAVE THE SAME SMILE...
NO, I'M NOT LEAVING!
MY GOD, YOU REALLY ARE EXCITED, AREN'T YOU?
YOU SEEM TO HAVE SPILT SOMETHING OVER YOUR PANTIES. COME, SLIDE OVER TO ME! LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK!
AHHH...A TOUCH... GOOD! THIS I KNOW!
THIS I CAN FOCUS ON!
SOFT TOUCH...A STOCKING... BOTH SMOOTH AND A LITTLE ROUGH...
YES...THINGS I KNOW ABOUT... I CAN BREATHE...I CAN DEAL WITH THIS.


SIT DOWN AND BOW YOUR HEAD.
GOOD! THIS I CAN DO! NO PROBLEM.
KINKY OR NOT, IT IS ALL ABOUT SEX IN THE END.
THAT I'M GOOD WITH.

NOW, MY LITTLE PLAYTHING, SINCE WE AREN'T IN MY HOME, I AM A LITTLE SHORT ON MY TOYS... HOWEVER...

SOME IMAGINATION AND SOME GOOD OL' KNOW-HOW...AND I'M SURE I CAN KEEP US WELL ENTERTAINED.

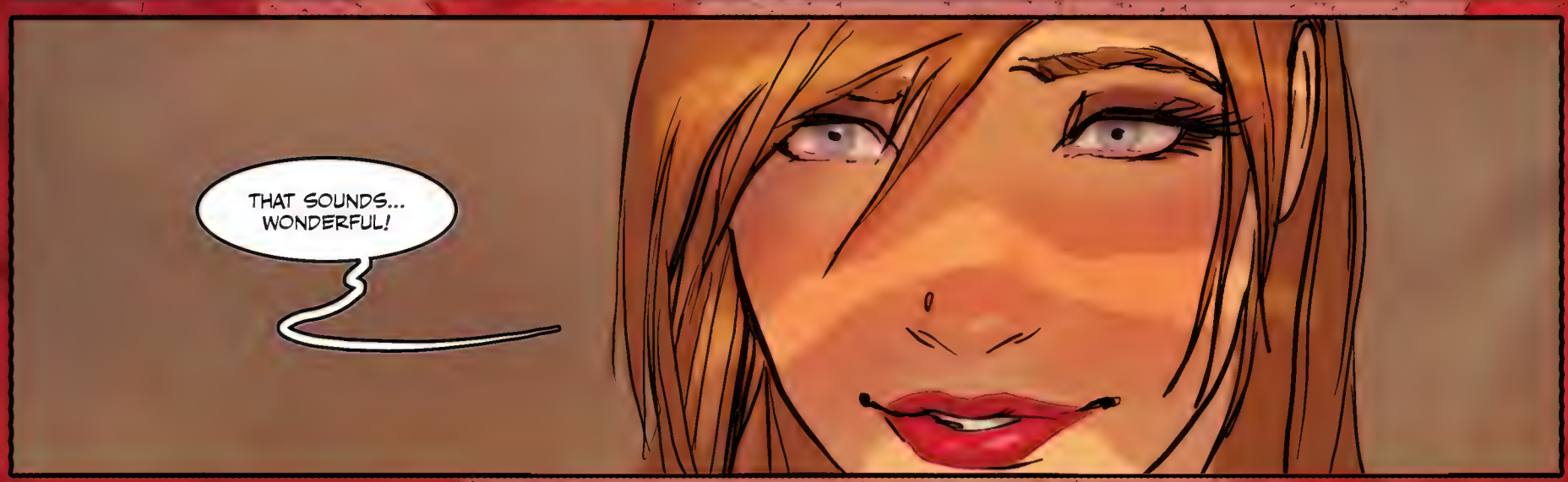
I GET IT NOW. I'M SCARED A BIT...
BUT NOT OF HER BODY...
I'M SCARED OF HER MIND.
OH, GOD...IF I LOOK AT HER, I'LL... I'LL FALL APART...

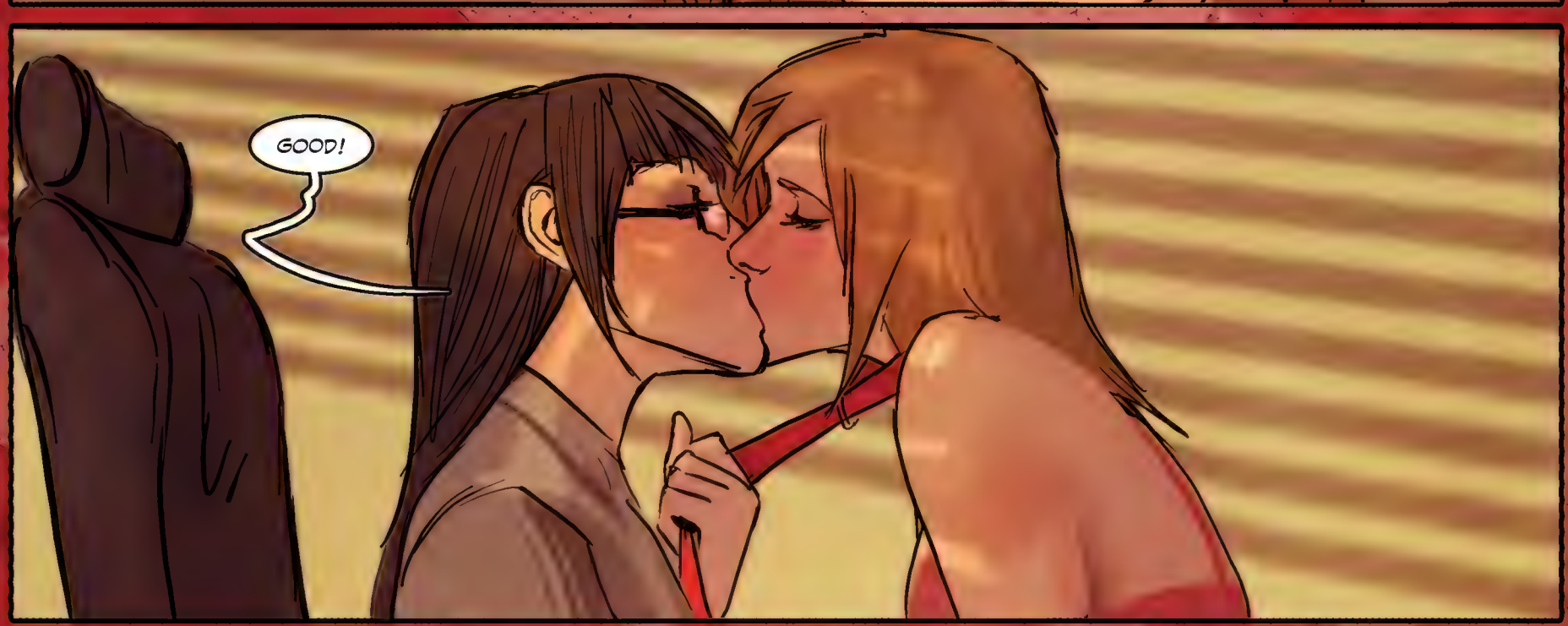

SHE IS TREMBLING...

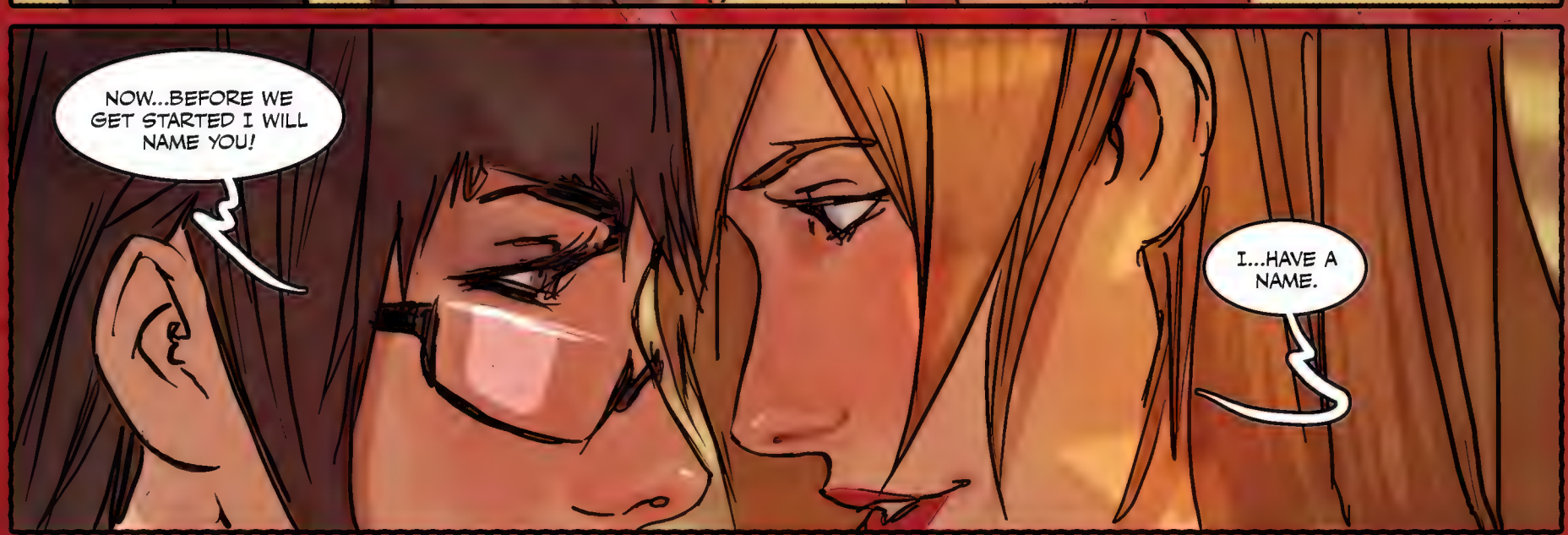
ANNE...I WANT YOU TO LOOK AT ME, AND I WANT YOU TO LISTEN WELL. WOULD I BE CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME?
I...HAD... UM...SEX...
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN. I'M ASKING ABOUT BONDAGE.
OH...THAT. WELL, YEAH, BUT I DID RESEARCH IT.
I SEE... ONLINE, I PRESUME?
YEAH...
I...I LIKED THIS STUFF... AND YET...
IT SCARES YOU?
...

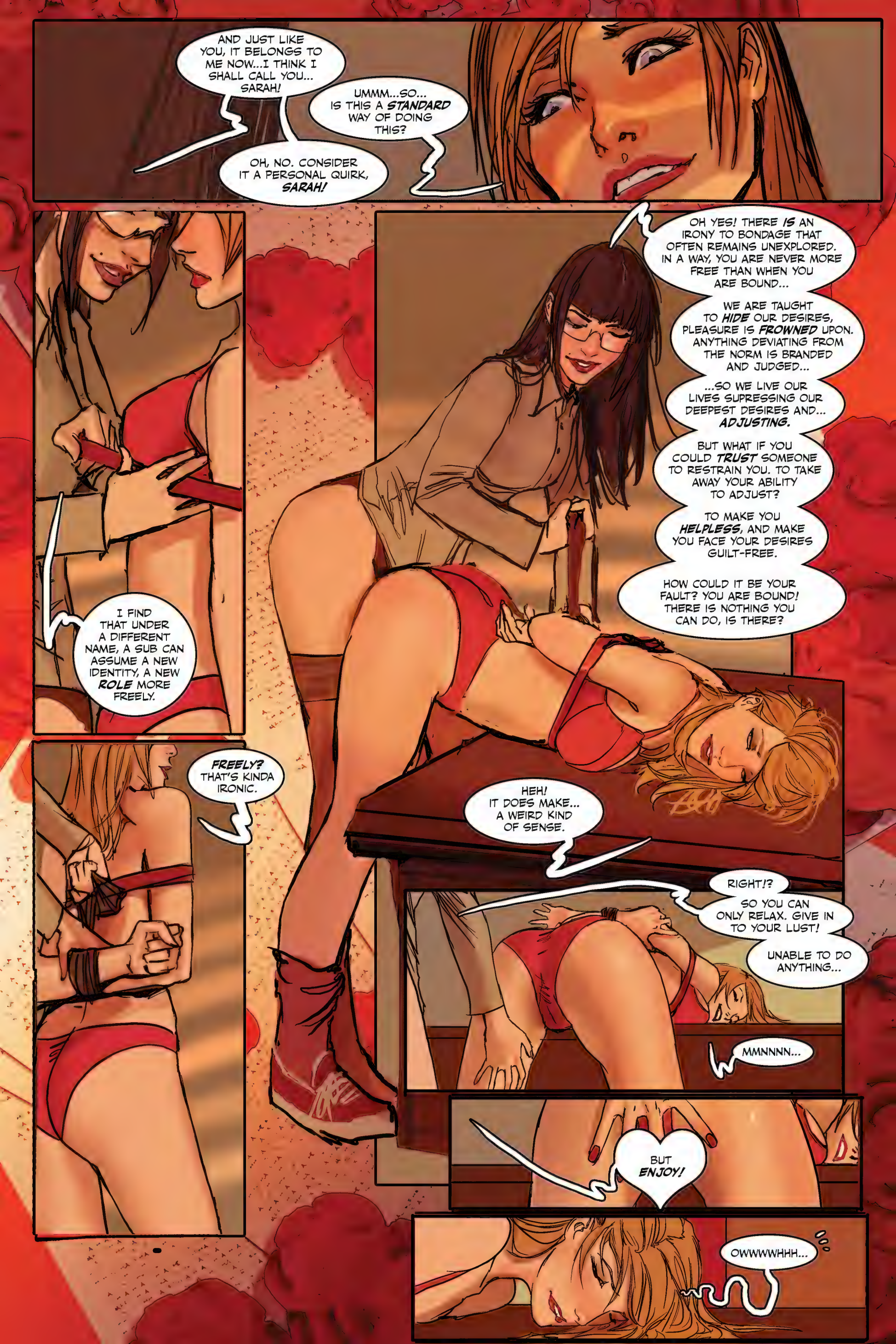
LISTEN, STUFF YOU SAW ONLINE...THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.
THOSE ARE, WELL...FANTASIES! OFTEN TAKEN TO THE POINT OF ABSURDITY. THE THING IS, BDSM IS A GAME OF TRUST. NOW, YOU DO NOT KNOW ME WELL ENOUGH TO TRUST ME, BUT GIVEN THAT YOU WERE BRAVE ENOUGH TO COME HERE, I WOULD GUESS THAT YOU ARE CURIOUS ABOUT EXPANDING YOUR BOUNDARIES OF PLEASURE.
UMM...YEAH.

SO, HOW ABOUT THIS, FORGET THE STUFF YOU HAVE SEEN. INSTEAD JOIN ME IN A GAME YOU HAVE NEVER PLAYED.
AND I CAN PROMISE YOU THIS, AS A SKILLED PLAYER I WILL WALK YOU THROUGH IT. AND I GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL HAVE FUN.


THAT SOUNDS... WONDERFUL!

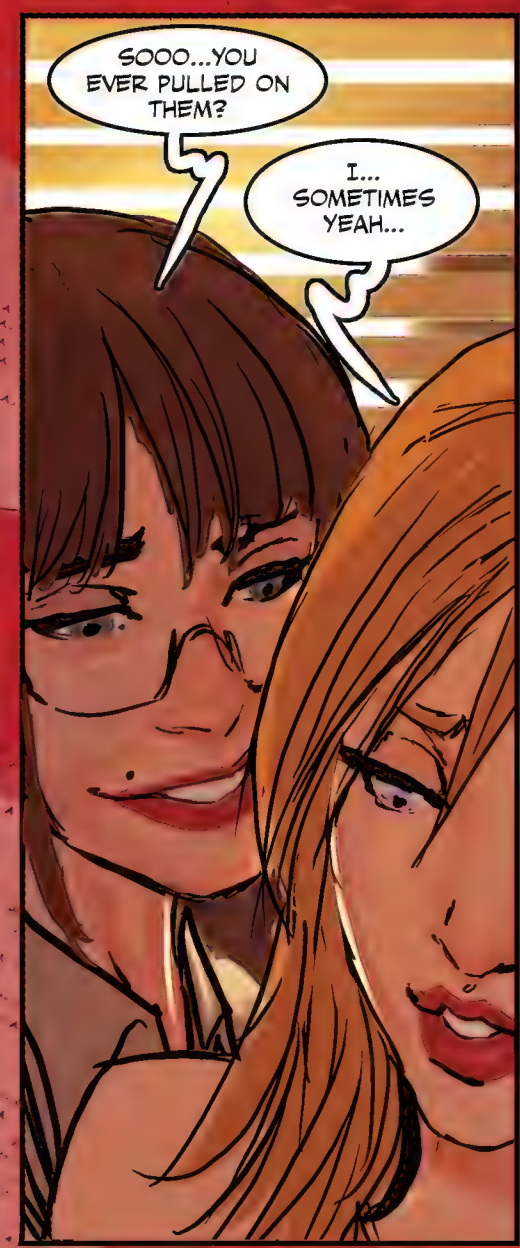

GOOD!

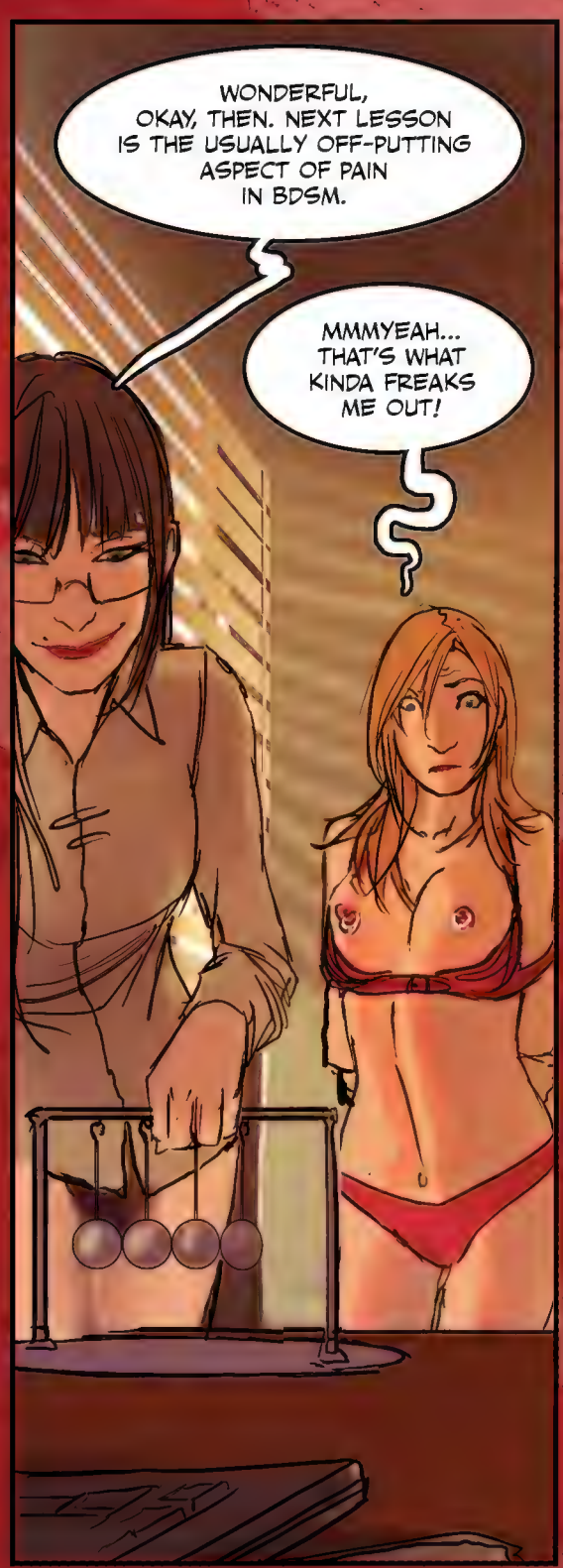

NOW...BEFORE WE GET STARTED I WILL NAME YOU!
I...HAVE A NAME.


AND JUST LIKE YOU, IT BELONGS TO ME NOW...I THINK I SHALL CALL YOU... SARAH!
UMMM...SO... IS THIS A STANDARD WAY OF DOING THIS?
OH, NO. CONSIDER IT A PERSONAL QUIRK, SARAH!
OH YES! THERE IS AN IRONY TO BONDAGE THAT OFTEN REMAINS UNEXPLORED. IN A WAY, YOU ARE NEVER MORE FREE THAN WHEN YOU ARE BOUND...
WE ARE TAUGHT TO HIDE OUR DESIRES, PLEASURE IS FROWNED UPON. ANYTHING DEVIATING FROM THE NORM IS BRANDED AND JUDGED...
...SO WE LIVE OUR LIVES SUPRESSING OUR DEEPEST DESIRES AND... ADJUSTING.
BUT WHAT IF YOU COULD TRUST SOMEONE TO RESTRAIN YOU. TO TAKE AWAY YOUR ABILITY TO ADJUST?
TO MAKE YOU HELPLESS, AND MAKE YOU FACE YOUR DESIRES GUILT-FREE.
HOW COULD IT BE YOUR FAULT? YOU ARE BOUND! THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO, IS THERE?
I FIND THAT UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME, A SUB CAN ASSUME A NEW IDENTITY, A NEW ROLE MORE FREELY.
FREELY? THAT'S KINDA IRONIC.
HEH! IT DOES MAKE... A WEIRD KIND OF SENSE.
RIGHT!?
SO YOU CAN ONLY RELAX. GIVE IN TO YOUR LUST!
UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING...
MMNNNN...
BUT ENJOY!
OWWWWHHH...

AND THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF SUBMISSION.
AWW... WHY DID YOU STOP?

PATIENCE! IT'S A -- OOHMYGOD!!! YOU HAVE YOUR NIPPLES PIERCED!
UM...YEAH.


SOOO...YOU EVER PULLED ON THEM?
I... SOMETIMES YEAH...

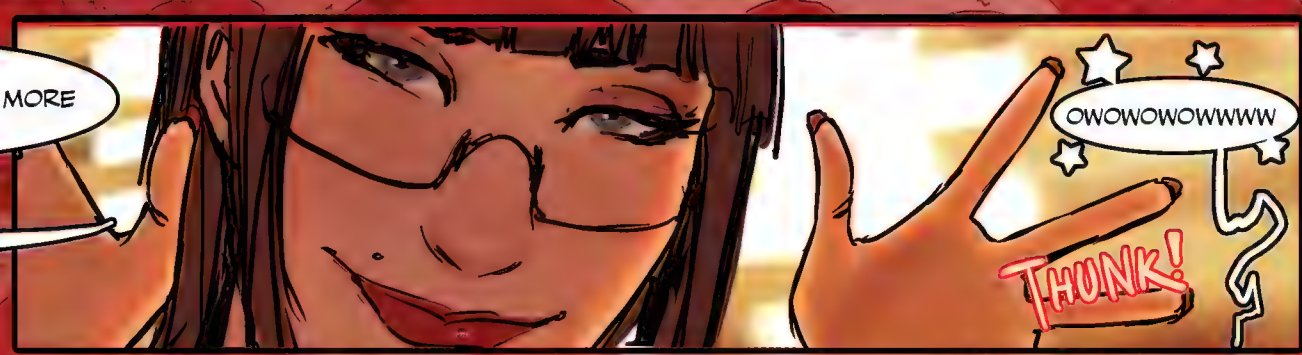

WONDERFUL, OKAY, THEN. NEXT LESSON IS THE USUALLY OFF-PUTTING ASPECT OF PAIN IN BDSM.
MMMYEAH... THAT'S WHAT KINDA FREAKS ME OUT!

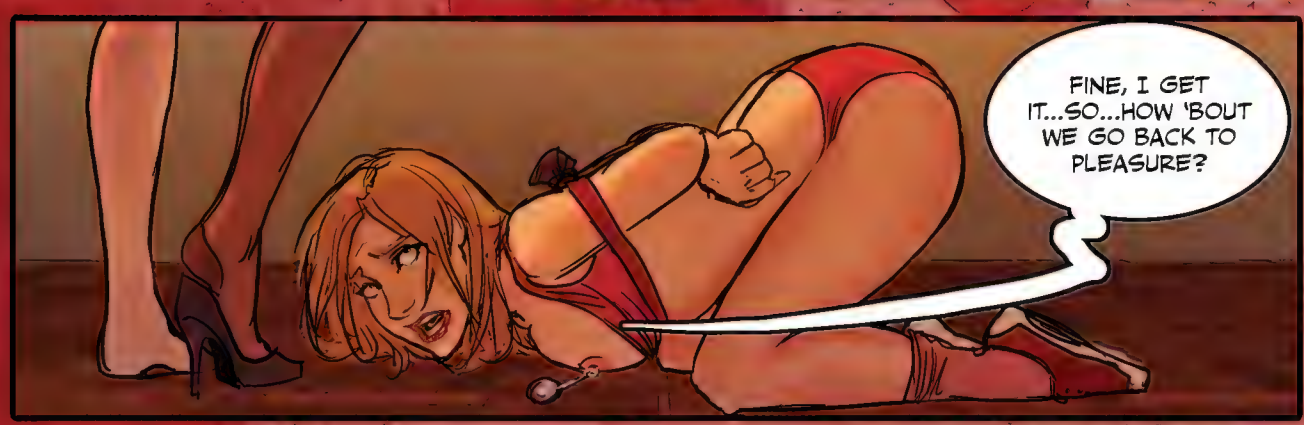
NOW, NOW... SOME SPICE CAN MAKE A GOOD THING BETTER!

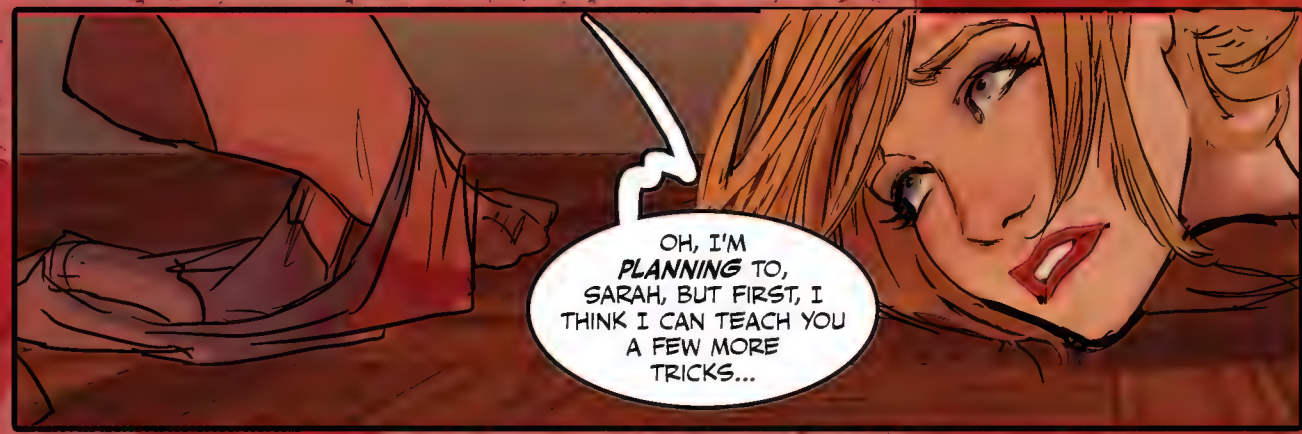
PAIN IS A METHOD OF CONTROL A DOM CAN USE. IT'S RARELY EXTREME, AND JUST LIKE BONDAGE, IT'S PURPOSE IS TO PERSUADE YOU TO EXPAND YOUR BOUNDARIES.
I, PERSONALLY, LIKE USING IT AS A TOOL IN A GAME OF FAKE CHOICES.
FAKE CHOICES?

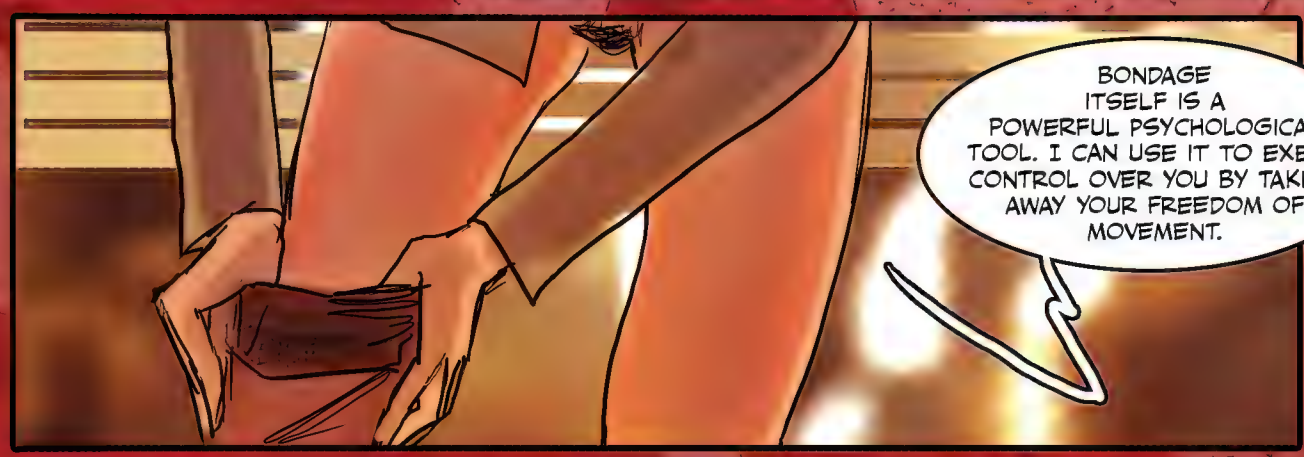
YUP! FOR EXAMPLE, I COULD TELL YOU TO LAY DOWN ON THE FLOOR.
AND IF I REFUSE?
HEY, I'M ALL ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF CHOICES. THING IS, GRAVITY IS A BIT TOUGHER TO PERSUADE THAN I AM.

OKAYOKAYOKAY, I GET YOUR POINT, SO LET'S SKIP THE LAYING ON THE FLOOR BIT!


GLADLY...BUT *GRAVITY* WILL REQUIRE MORE PERSUADING!
OWOWOWOWWWW
THUNK!

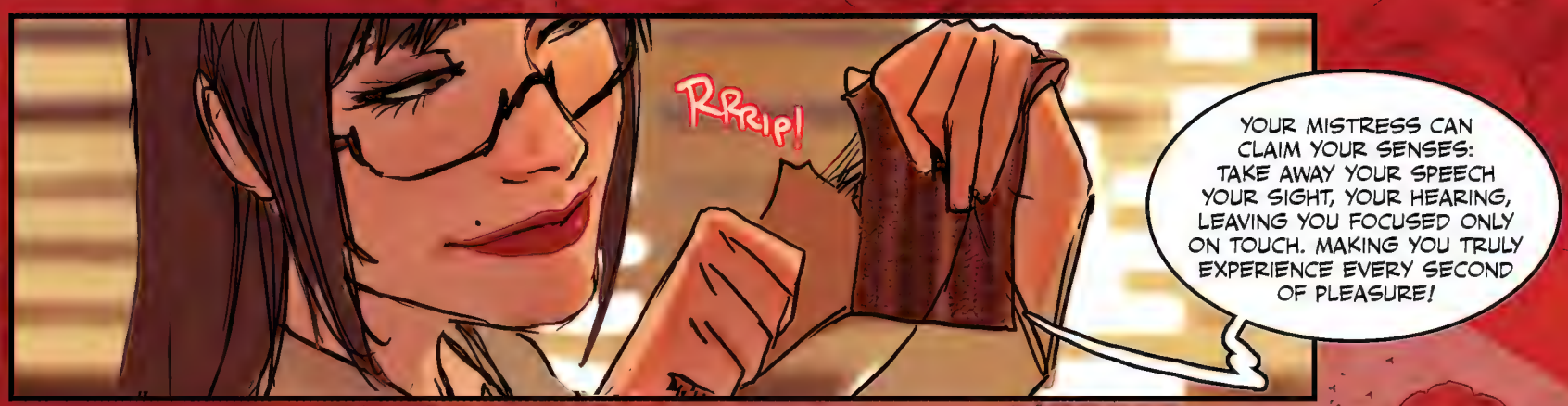

FINE, I GET IT...SO...HOW 'BOUT WE GO BACK TO PLEASURE?

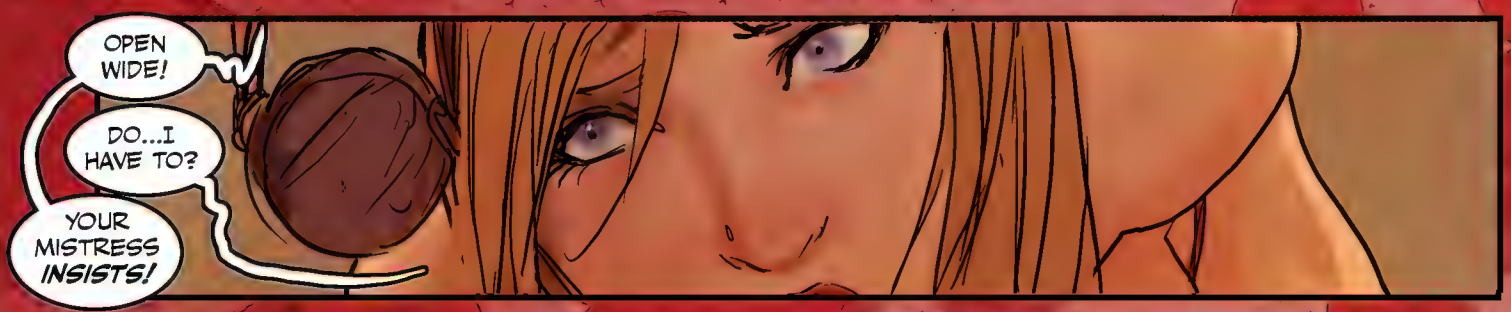

OH, I'M *PLANNING* TO, SARAH, BUT FIRST, I THINK I CAN TEACH YOU A FEW MORE TRICKS...

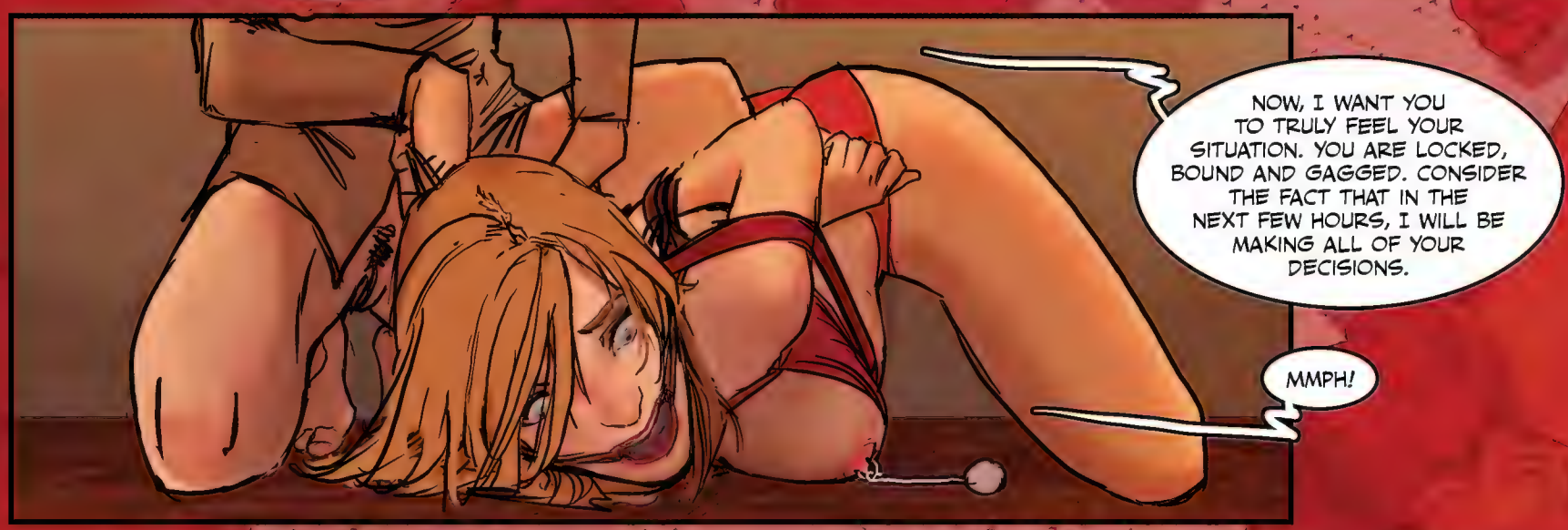

BONDAGE ITSELF IS A POWERFUL PSYCHOLOGICAL TOOL. I CAN USE IT TO EXERT CONTROL OVER YOU BY TAKING AWAY YOUR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.

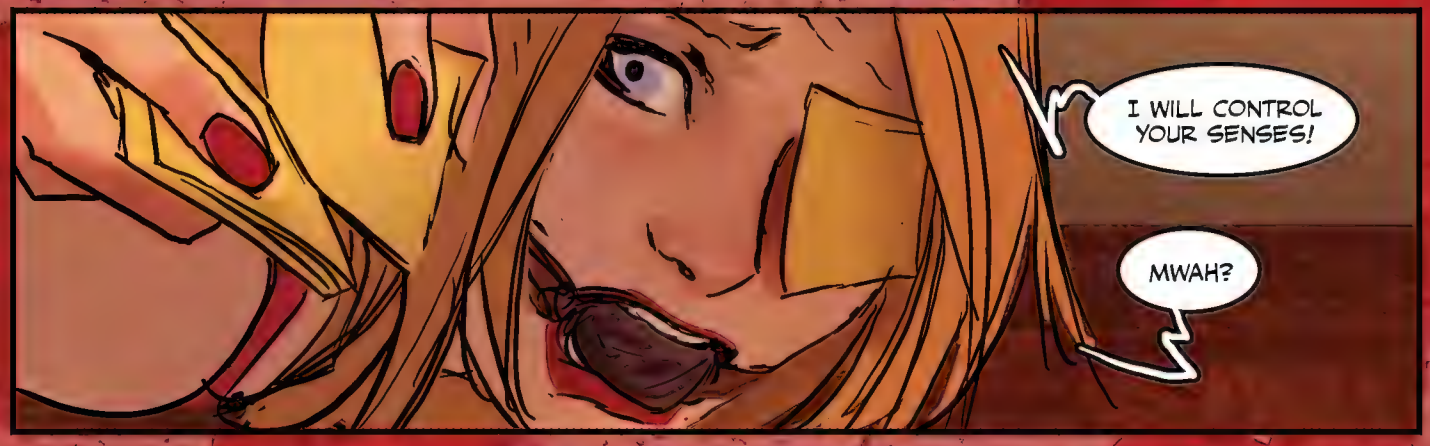
THIS IS THE FIRST STEP.

BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE...


RRRIP!
YOUR MISTRESS CAN CLAIM YOUR SENSES: TAKE AWAY YOUR SPEECH YOUR SIGHT, YOUR HEARING, LEAVING YOU FOCUSED ONLY ON TOUCH. MAKING YOU TRULY EXPERIENCE EVERY SECOND OF PLEASURE!

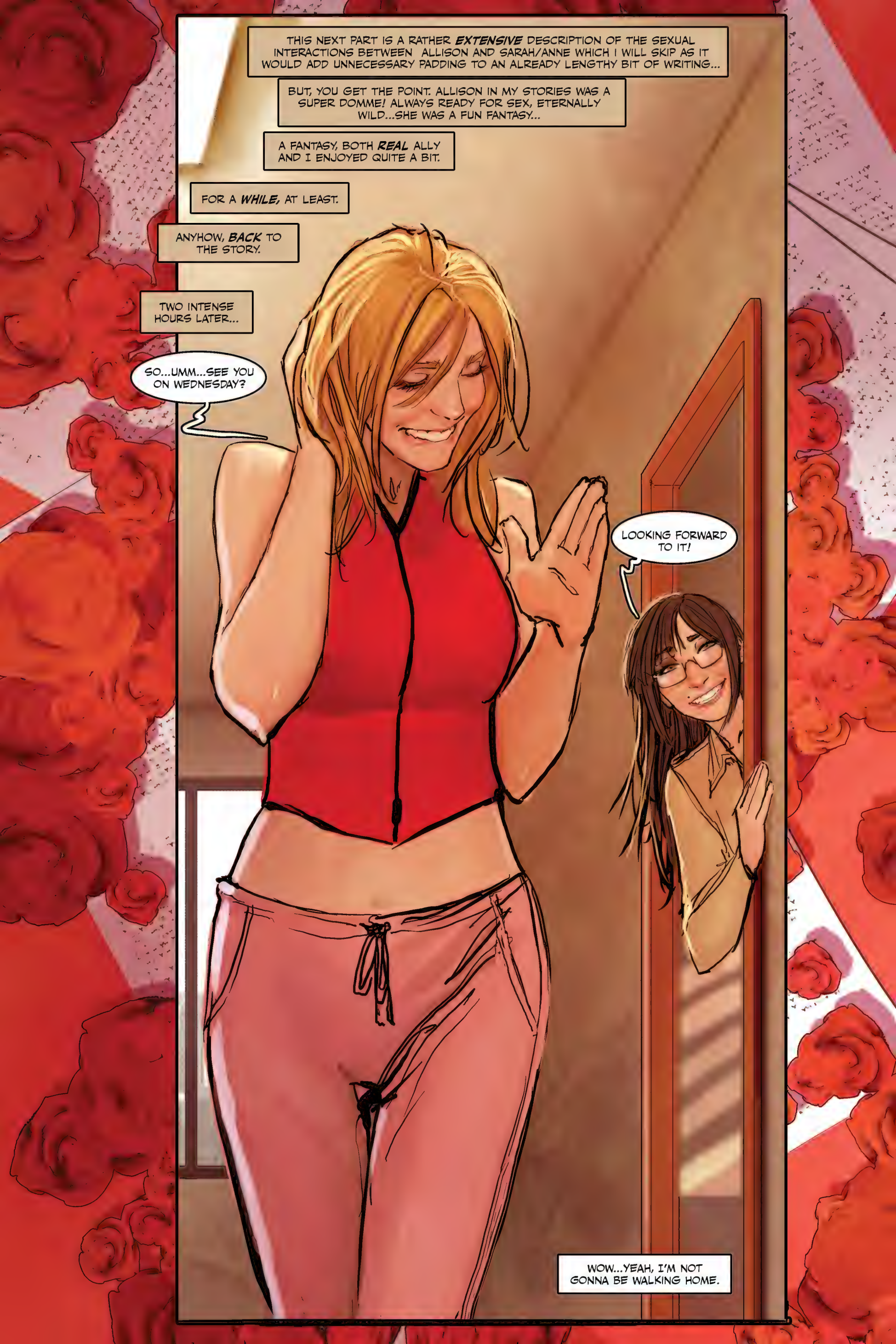

OPEN WIDE!
DO...I HAVE TO?
YOUR MISTRESS INSISTS!

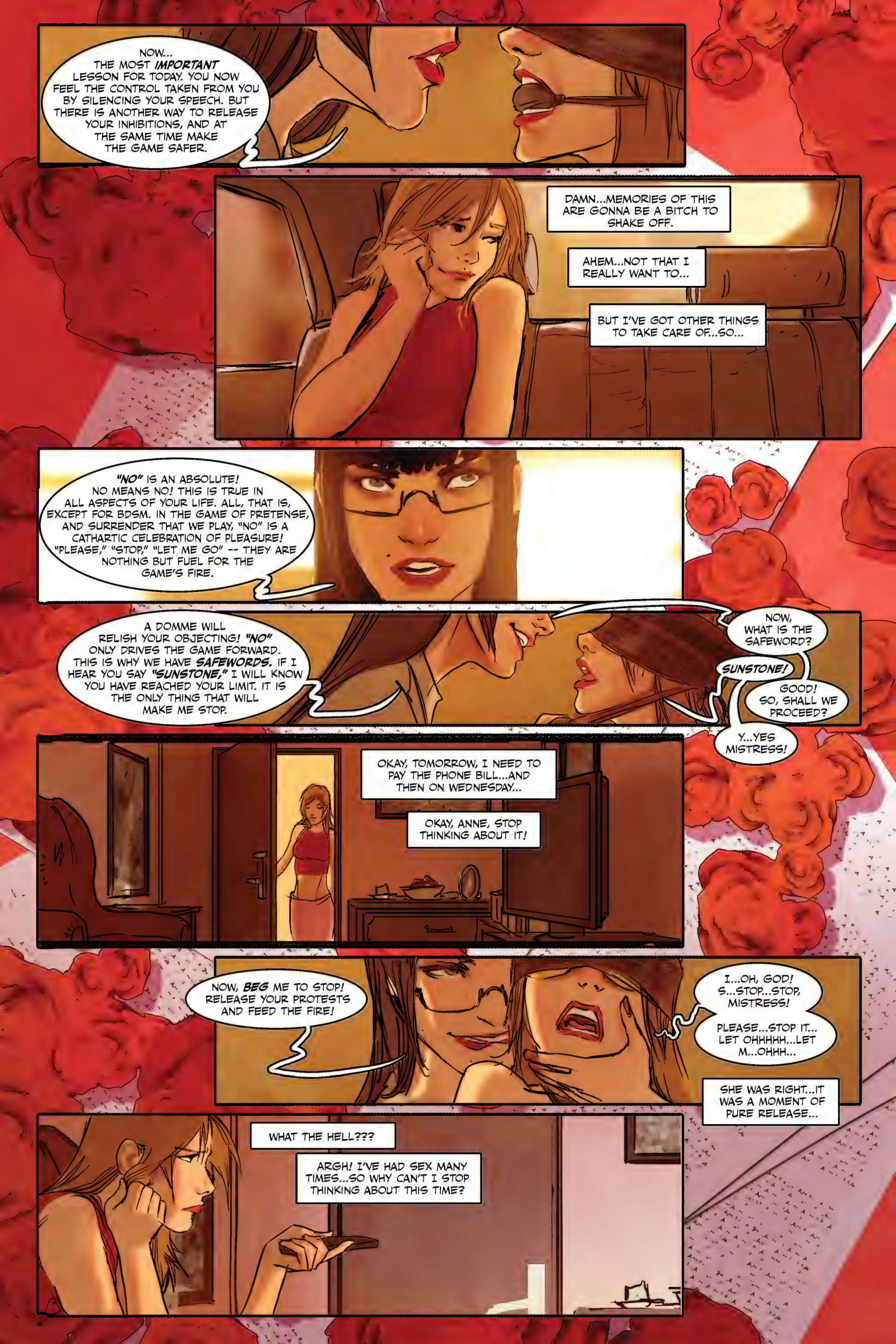

NOW, I WANT YOU TO TRULY FEEL YOUR SITUATION. YOU ARE LOCKED, BOUND AND GAGGED. CONSIDER THE FACT THAT IN THE NEXT FEW HOURS, I WILL BE MAKING ALL OF YOUR DECISIONS.
MMPH!

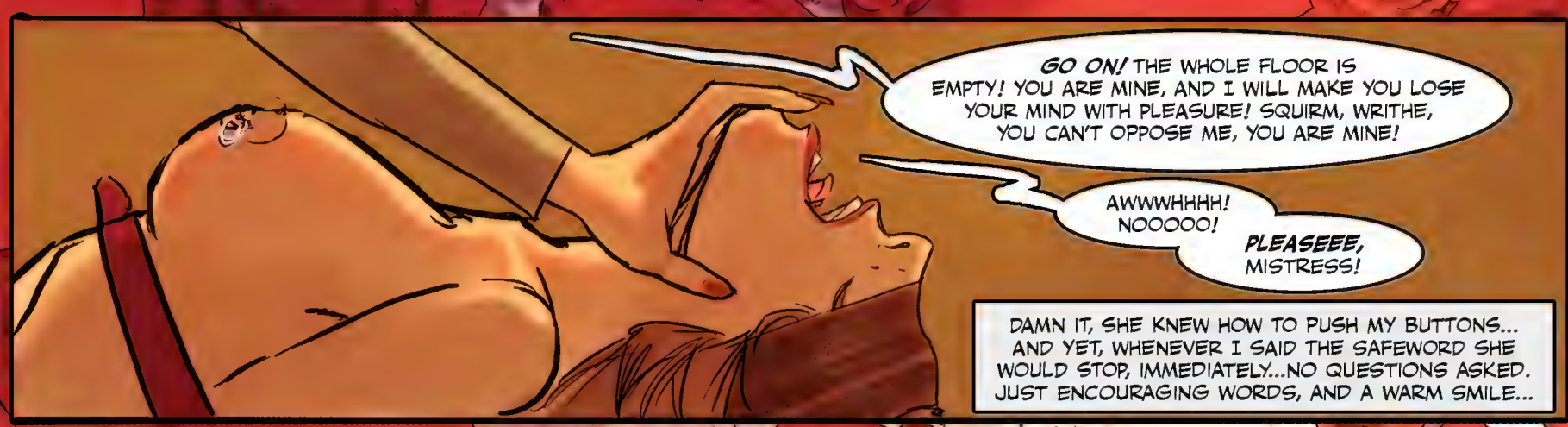

I WILL CONTROL YOUR SENSES!
MWAH?

IN THE SIGHTLESS DARK, I WILL OPEN YOUR EYES TO NEW PLEASURES.
MMMNNN!

AND ABOVE ALL, I WILL KEEP YOU SAFE. WHILE YOU'RE WITH ME YOU WILL BE SARAH. THERE IS NO ANNE. ANNE IS CLEAN FROM ALL OF THIS DIRTY BUSINESS...
ONLY SARAH CAN EXPLORE THESE DARK PLEASURES.
ACCEPT THE FACT THAT YOU ARE MY TOY NOW, SARAH, AND I TAKE GOOD CARE OF MY TOYS.
NOW, WHAT DO YOU SAY WE HAVE SOME FUN?


THIS NEXT PART IS A RATHER EXTENSIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE SEXUAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ALLISON AND SARAH/ANNE WHICH I WILL SKIP AS IT WOULD ADD UNNECESSARY PADDING TO AN ALREADY LENGTHY BIT OF WRITING...
BUT, YOU GET THE POINT. ALLISON IN MY STORIES WAS A SUPER DOMME! ALWAYS READY FOR SEX, ETERNALLY WILD...SHE WAS A FUN FANTASY...
A FANTASY, BOTH REAL ALLY AND I ENJOYED QUITE A BIT.
FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST.
ANYHOW, BACK TO THE STORY.
TWO INTENSE HOURS LATER...
SO...UMM...SEE YOU ON WEDNESDAY?
LOOKING FORWARD TO IT!
WOW...YEAH, I'M NOT GONNA BE WALKING HOME.


NOW... THE MOST *IMPORTANT* LESSON FOR TODAY. YOU NOW FEEL THE CONTROL TAKEN FROM YOU BY SILENCING YOUR SPEECH. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER WAY TO RELEASE YOUR INHIBITIONS, AND AT THE SAME TIME MAKE THE GAME SAFER.
DAMN...MEMORIES OF THIS ARE GONNA BE A BITCH TO SHAKE OFF.
AHEM...NOT THAT I REALLY WANT TO...
BUT I'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF...SO...
"NO" IS AN ABSOLUTE! NO MEANS NO! THIS IS TRUE IN ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE. ALL, THAT IS, EXCEPT FOR BDSM. IN THE GAME OF PRETENSE, AND SURRENDER THAT WE PLAY, "NO" IS A CATHARTIC CELEBRATION OF PLEASURE! "PLEASE," "STOP," "LET ME GO" -- THEY ARE NOTHING BUT FUEL FOR THE GAME'S FIRE.
A DOMME WILL RELISH YOUR OBJECTING! *"NO"* ONLY DRIVES THE GAME FORWARD. THIS IS WHY WE HAVE *SAFEWORDS.* IF I HEAR YOU SAY *"SUNSTONE,"* I WILL KNOW YOU HAVE REACHED YOUR LIMIT. IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT WILL MAKE ME STOP.
NOW, WHAT IS THE SAFEWORD?
SUNSTONE!
GOOD! SO, SHALL WE PROCEED?
Y...YES MISTRESS!
OKAY, TOMORROW, I NEED TO PAY THE PHONE BILL...AND THEN ON WEDNESDAY...
OKAY, ANNE, STOP THINKING ABOUT IT!
NOW, *BEG* ME TO STOP! RELEASE YOUR PROTESTS AND FEED THE FIRE!
I...OH, GOD! S...STOP...STOP, MISTRESS!
PLEASE...STOP IT... LET OHHHHH...LET M...OHHH...
SHE WAS RIGHT...IT WAS A MOMENT OF PURE RELEASE...
WHAT THE HELL???
ARGH! I'VE HAD SEX MANY TIMES...SO WHY CAN'T I STOP THINKING ABOUT THIS TIME?

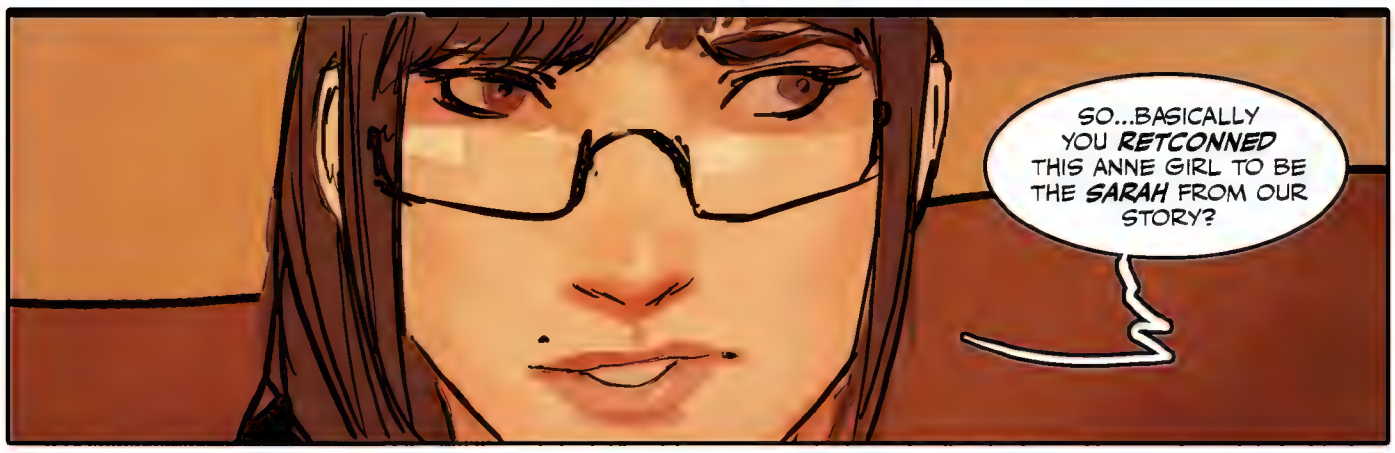


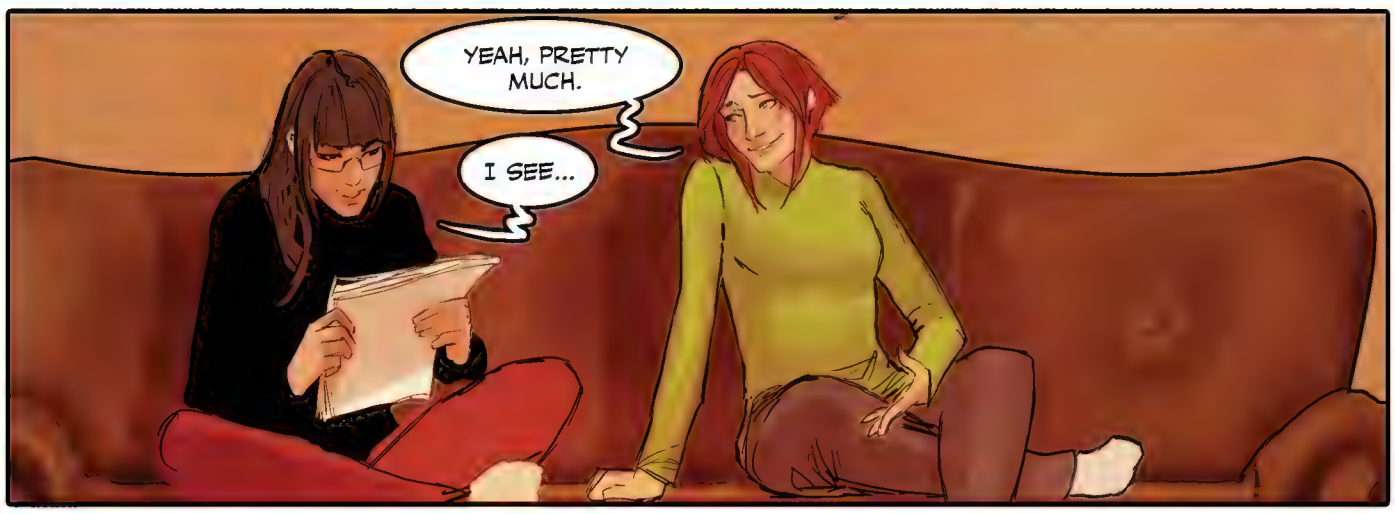
As her hands started mischievously moving in, Anne felt that warm sensation of sinking back into a wonderful world of secret pleasures.

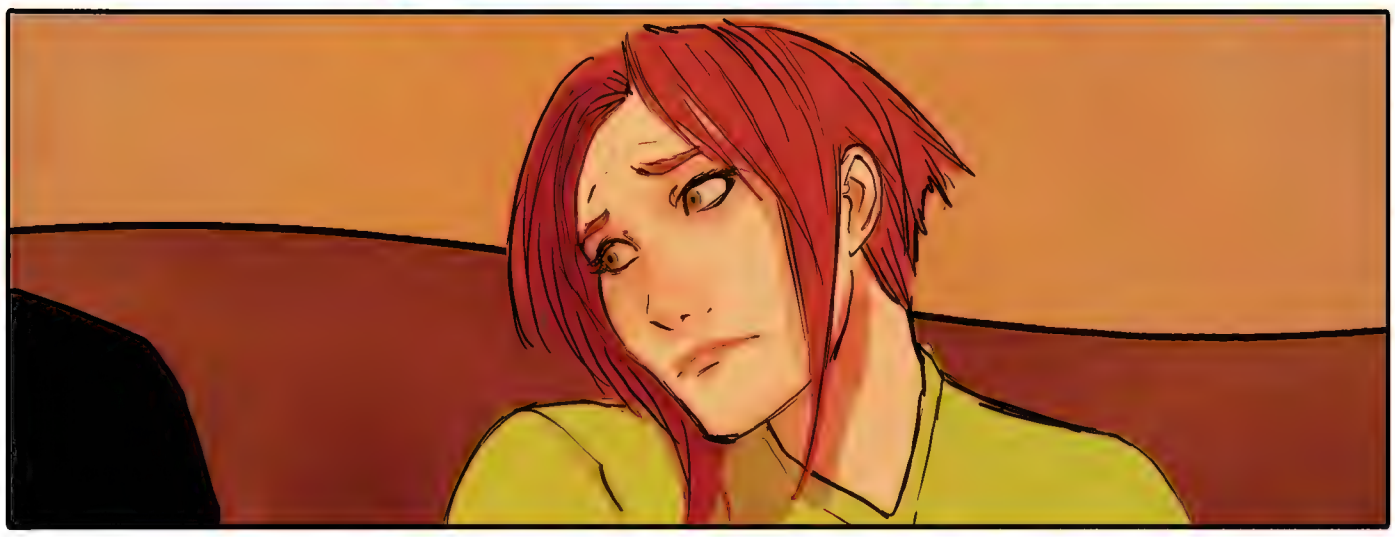
At that moment, a small, still-rational part of her chuckled at the simple brilliance of Allison's idea of taking away her name. In a way, she was not the same person in these secret times of carnal release... Be it alone or with a partner, in these moments she was a wild, untamed creature of lust and desire.

Truth was...Allison hadn't taken her name. She had in fact given a name to that secret person she would become.

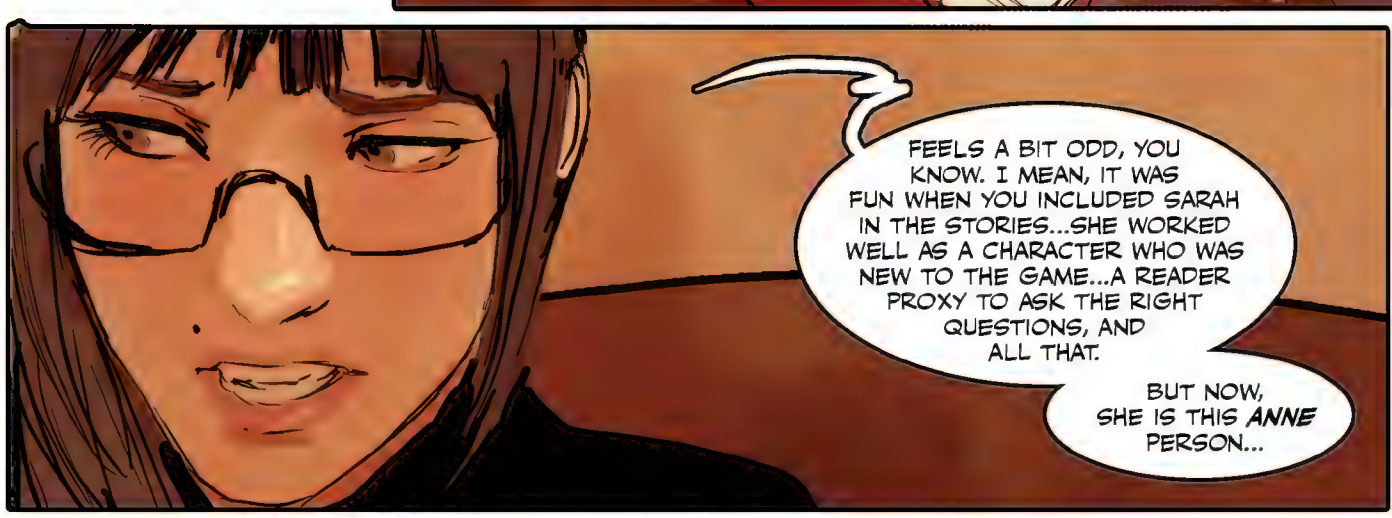
She was Sarah, and she was finally free.


SO...BASICALLY YOU ***RETCONNED*** THIS ANNE GIRL TO BE THE ***SARAH*** FROM OUR STORY?


YEAH, PRETTY MUCH.
I SEE...



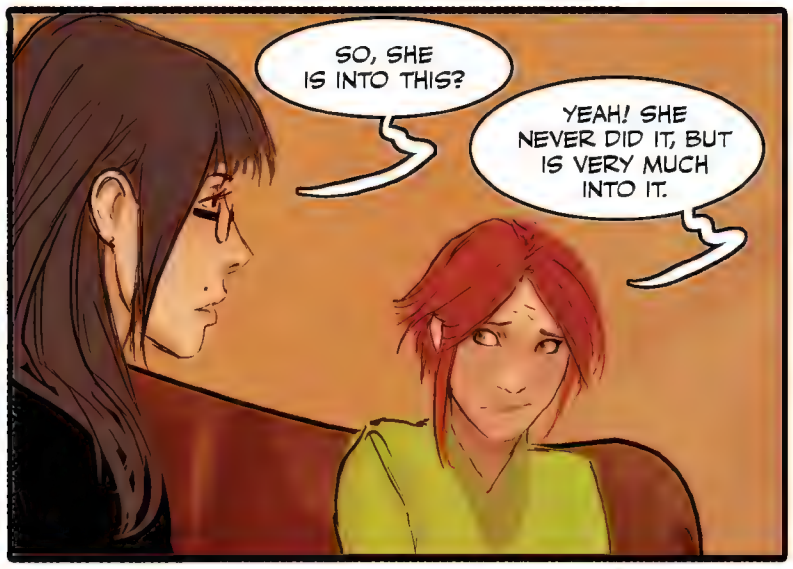
UM...IS THAT ***OKAY*** WITH YOU? I GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY AND FORGOT TO... Y'KNOW...ASK.
NO, IT'S...FINE. IT'S JUST...I DUNNO...

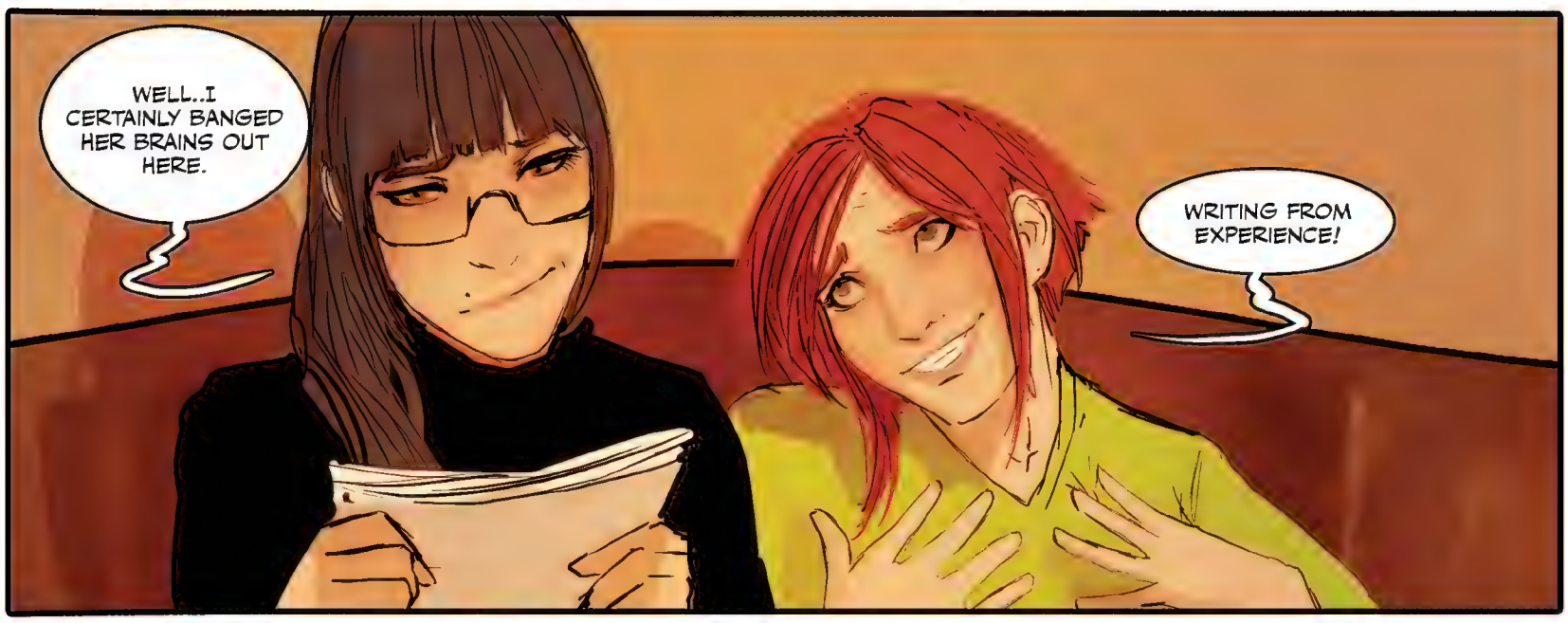

FEELS A BIT ODD, YOU KNOW. I MEAN, IT WAS FUN WHEN YOU INCLUDED SARAH IN THE STORIES...SHE WORKED WELL AS A CHARACTER WHO WAS NEW TO THE GAME...A READER PROXY TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS, AND ALL THAT.
BUT NOW, SHE IS THIS ***ANNE*** PERSON...

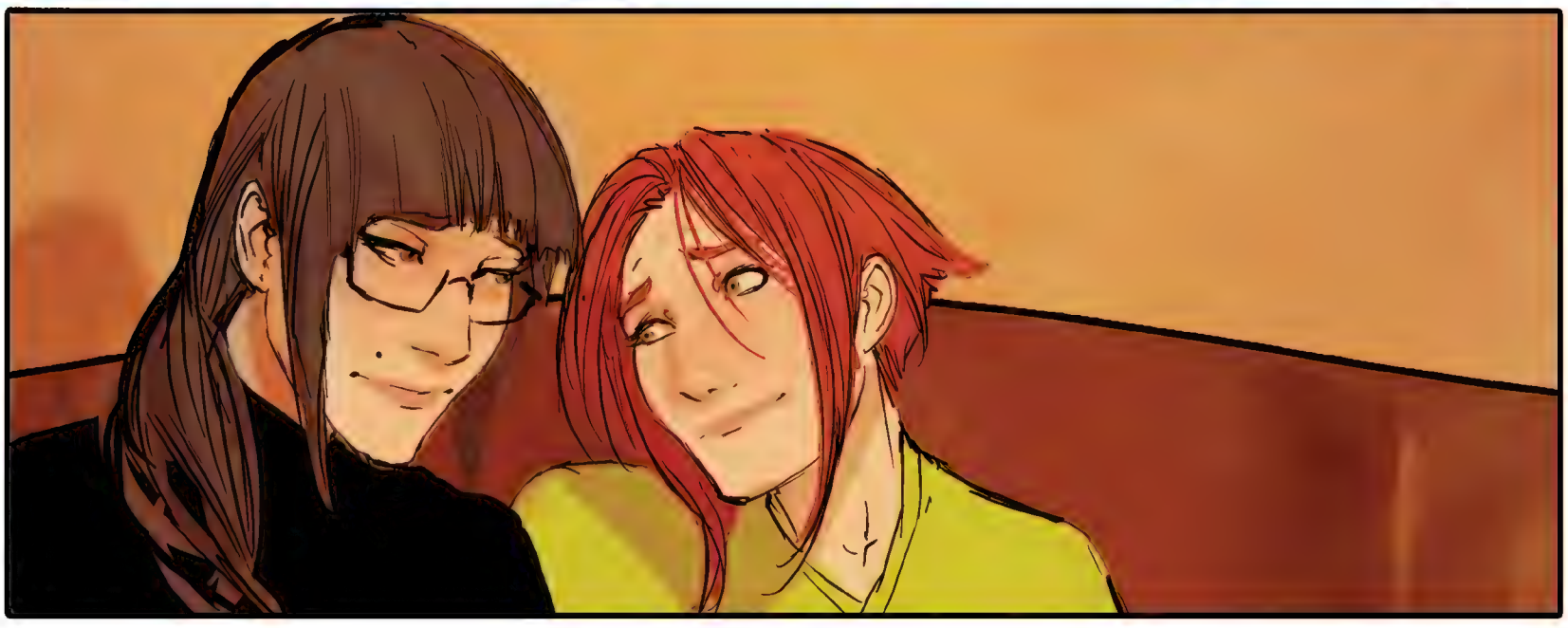
I MEAN, DON'T GET ME WRONG...IT'S A VERY HOT STORY, AND THE WHOLE TAKING OF HER NAME BUSINESS WAS VERY SEXY.
IT'S JUST... IT WAS OUR STORY, SO I...I DON'T KNOW...

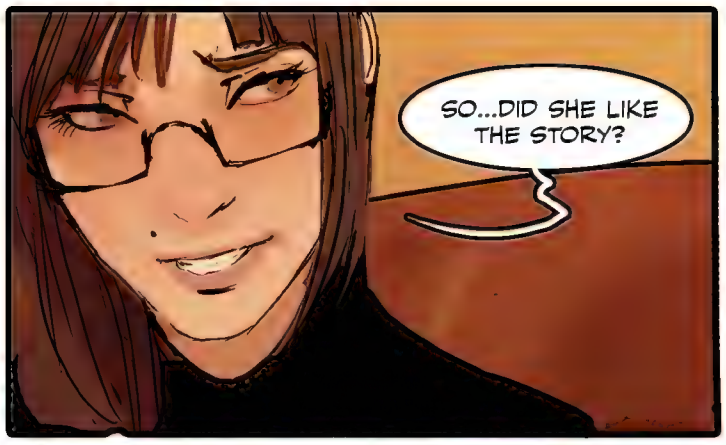
CRAP! I'M SORRY ALLY. I HONESTLY MEANT NOTHING BY THIS. IT JUST SEEMED LIKE A FUN ELABORATE THANK-YOU NOTE TO ANNE...
AND ONCE I START WRITING...IT...
IT JUST SORT OF FLOWS!

NAH. IT'S OKAY. I'M OVERREACTING.


SO, SHE IS INTO THIS?
YEAH! SHE NEVER DID IT, BUT IS VERY MUCH INTO IT.


WELL..I CERTAINLY BANGED HER BRAINS OUT HERE.
WRITING FROM EXPERIENCE!




SO...DID SHE LIKE THE STORY?

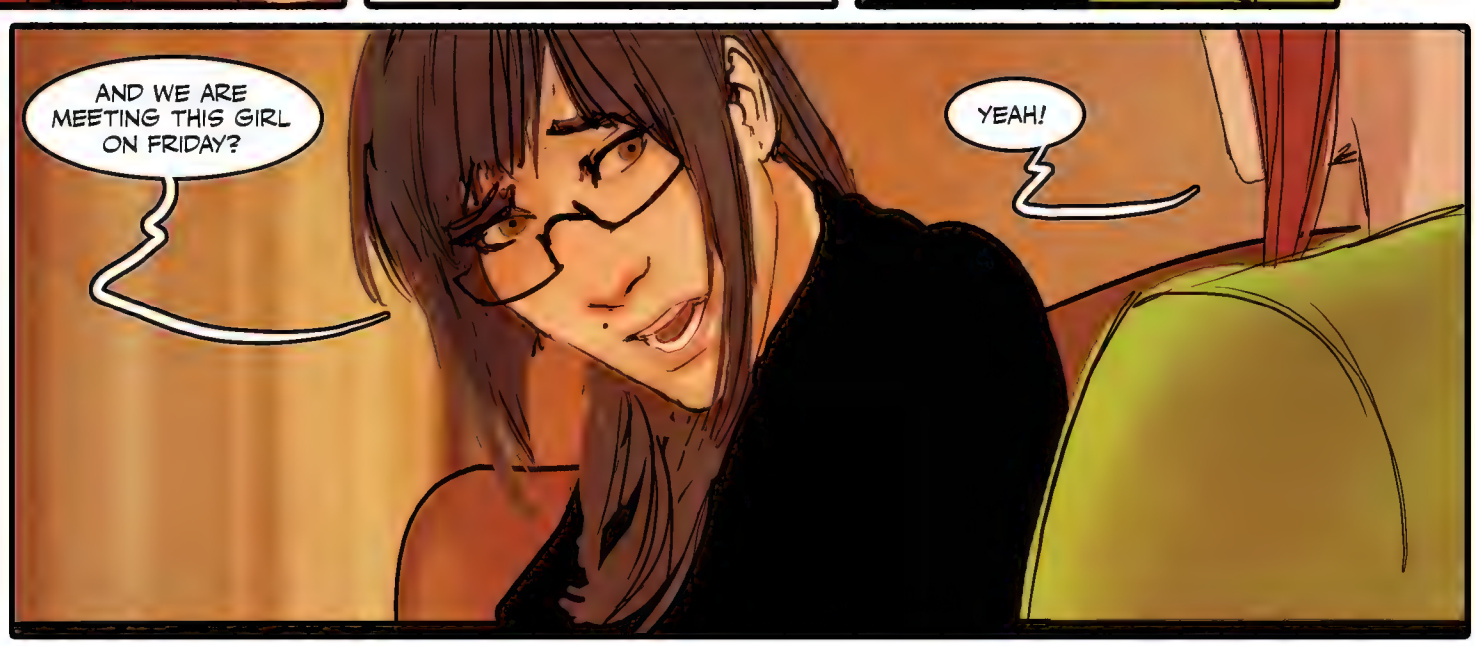
OH, GOTTA ASK!

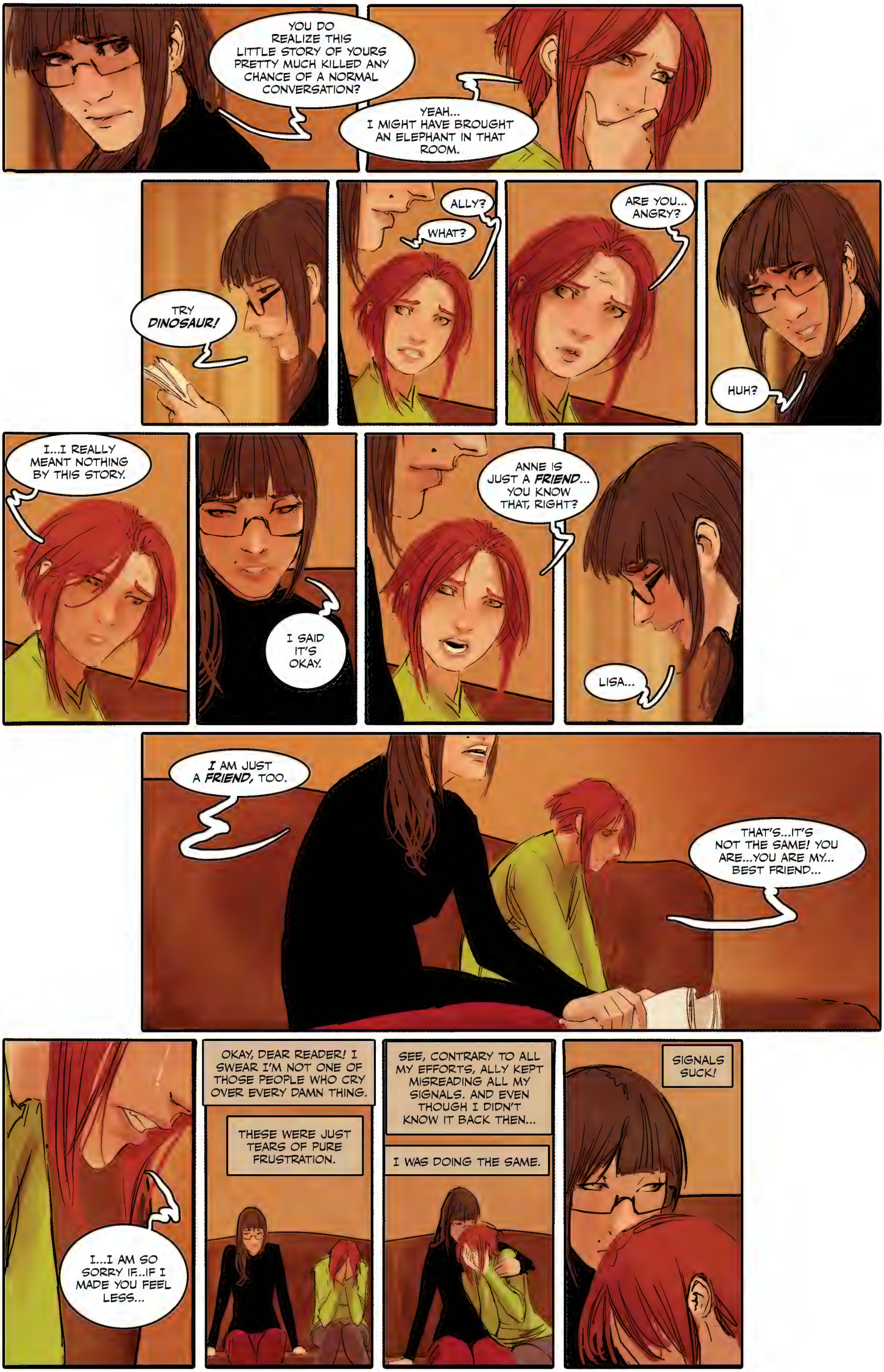
BI-BLIP!

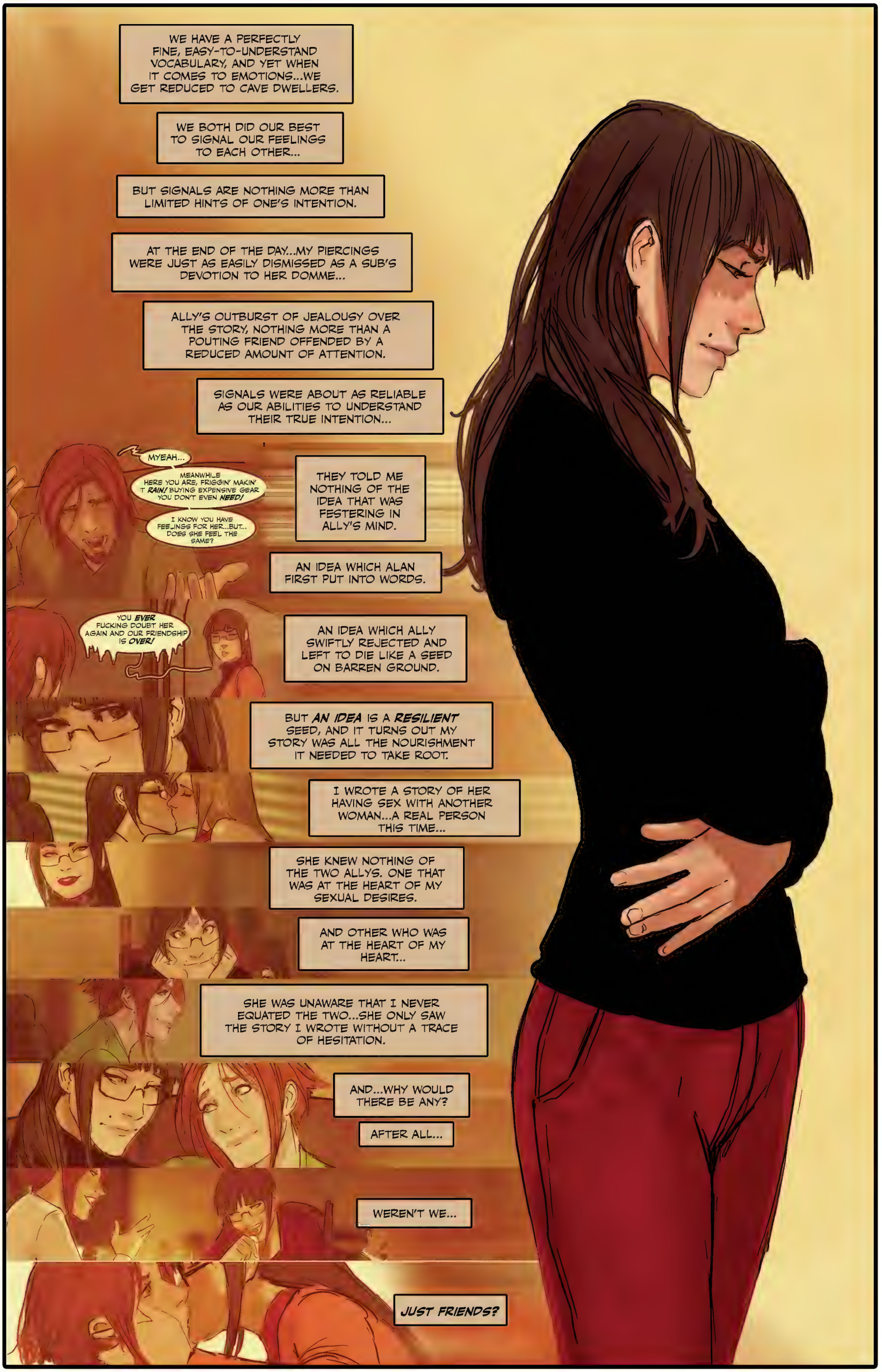
BI-BLIP!

I RATE IT FIVE OUT OF FIVE VIBRATORS...I AM SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING SWITCHING TO SOME WALL SOCKET POWERED TOYS BECAUSE OF THIS STORY...

YOU ROCKED HER WORLD!
YEAAH...


AND WE ARE MEETING THIS GIRL ON FRIDAY?
YEAH!


YOU DO REALIZE THIS LITTLE STORY OF YOURS PRETTY MUCH KILLED ANY CHANCE OF A NORMAL CONVERSATION?
YEAH... I MIGHT HAVE BROUGHT AN ELEPHANT IN THAT ROOM.
TRY DINOSAUR!
ALLY?
WHAT?
ARE YOU... ANGRY?
HUH?
I...I REALLY MEANT NOTHING BY THIS STORY.
I SAID IT'S OKAY.
ANNE IS JUST A FRIEND... YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?
LISA...
I AM JUST A FRIEND, TOO.
THAT'S...IT'S NOT THE SAME! YOU ARE...YOU ARE MY... BEST FRIEND...
I...I AM SO SORRY IF...IF I MADE YOU FEEL LESS...
OKAY, DEAR READER! I SWEAR I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO CRY OVER EVERY DAMN THING.
THESE WERE JUST TEARS OF PURE FRUSTRATION.
SEE, CONTRARY TO ALL MY EFFORTS, ALLY KEPT MISREADING ALL MY SIGNALS. AND EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW IT BACK THEN...
I WAS DOING THE SAME.
SIGNALS SUCK!


WE HAVE A PERFECTLY FINE, EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND VOCABULARY, AND YET WHEN IT COMES TO EMOTIONS...WE GET REDUCED TO CAVE DWELLERS.
WE BOTH DID OUR BEST TO SIGNAL OUR FEELINGS TO EACH OTHER...
BUT SIGNALS ARE NOTHING MORE THAN LIMITED HINTS OF ONE'S INTENTION.
AT THE END OF THE DAY...MY PIERCINGS WERE JUST AS EASILY DISMISSED AS A SUB'S DEVOTION TO HER DOMME...
ALLY'S OUTBURST OF JEALOUSY OVER THE STORY, NOTHING MORE THAN A POUTING FRIEND OFFENDED BY A REDUCED AMOUNT OF ATTENTION.
SIGNALS WERE ABOUT AS RELIABLE AS OUR ABILITIES TO UNDERSTAND THEIR TRUE INTENTION...
MYEAH...
MEANWHILE HERE YOU ARE, FRIGGIN' MAKIN' IT RAIN! BUYING EXPENSIVE GEAR YOU DON'T EVEN NEED!
I KNOW YOU HAVE FEELINGS FOR HER...BUT... DOES SHE FEEL THE SAME?
THEY TOLD ME NOTHING OF THE IDEA THAT WAS FESTERING IN ALLY'S MIND.
AN IDEA WHICH ALAN FIRST PUT INTO WORDS.
YOU EVER FUCKING DOUBT HER AGAIN AND OUR FRIENDSHIP IS OVER!
AN IDEA WHICH ALLY SWIFTLY REJECTED AND LEFT TO DIE LIKE A SEED ON BARREN GROUND.
BUT AN IDEA IS A RESILIENT SEED, AND IT TURNS OUT MY STORY WAS ALL THE NOURISHMENT IT NEEDED TO TAKE ROOT.
I WROTE A STORY OF HER HAVING SEX WITH ANOTHER WOMAN...A REAL PERSON THIS TIME...
SHE KNEW NOTHING OF THE TWO ALLYS. ONE THAT WAS AT THE HEART OF MY SEXUAL DESIRES.
AND OTHER WHO WAS AT THE HEART OF MY HEART...
SHE WAS UNAWARE THAT I NEVER EQUATED THE TWO...SHE ONLY SAW THE STORY I WROTE WITHOUT A TRACE OF HESITATION.
AND...WHY WOULD THERE BE ANY?
AFTER ALL...
WEREN'T WE...
JUST FRIENDS?

BE IT LOVE OR FRIENDSHIP...OR WHATEVER ALLY AND I HAD, NOT COUNTING A BREAKUP, AN ARGUMENT GENERALLY HAS TWO OUTCOMES.

WITH EFFORT, HONESTY AND COMPROMISE, IT CAN BE WORKED OUT, RESULTING IN FORGIVENESS.

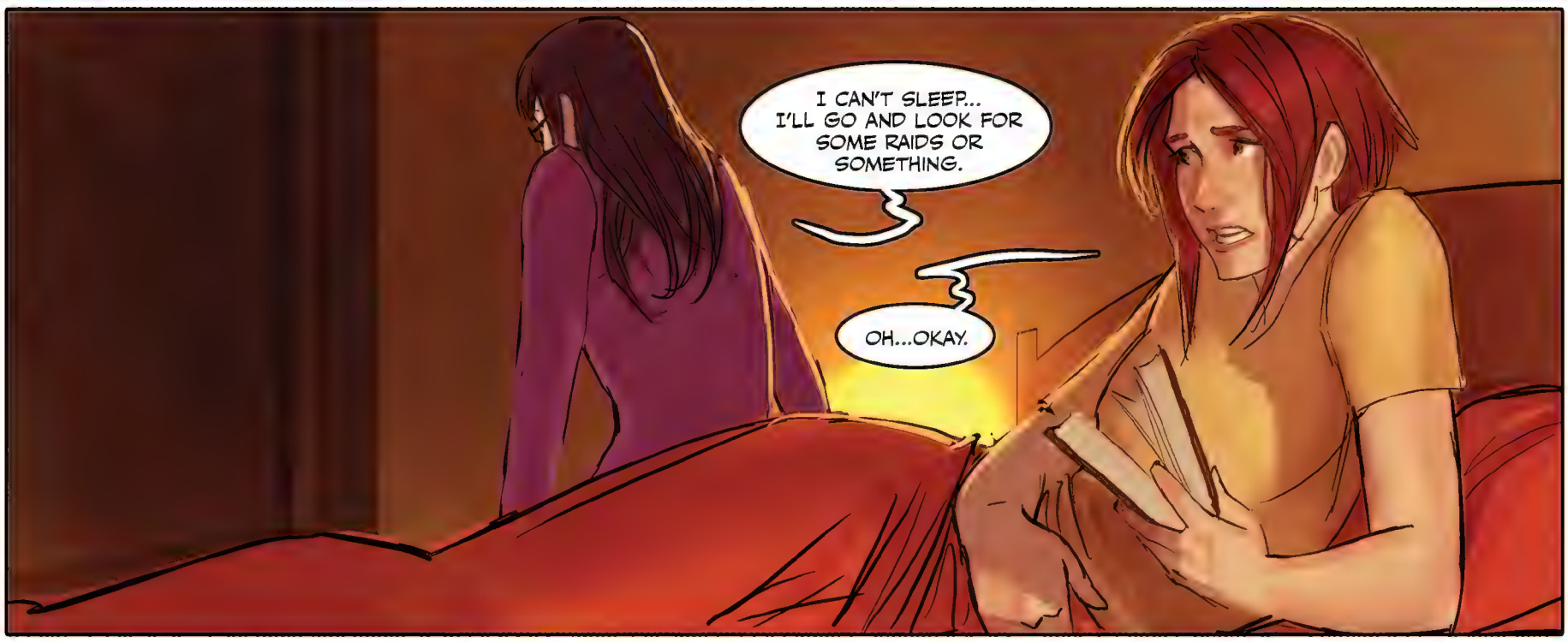
OR YOU CAN JUST MOVE ON WITHOUT REALLY WORKING IT OUT.

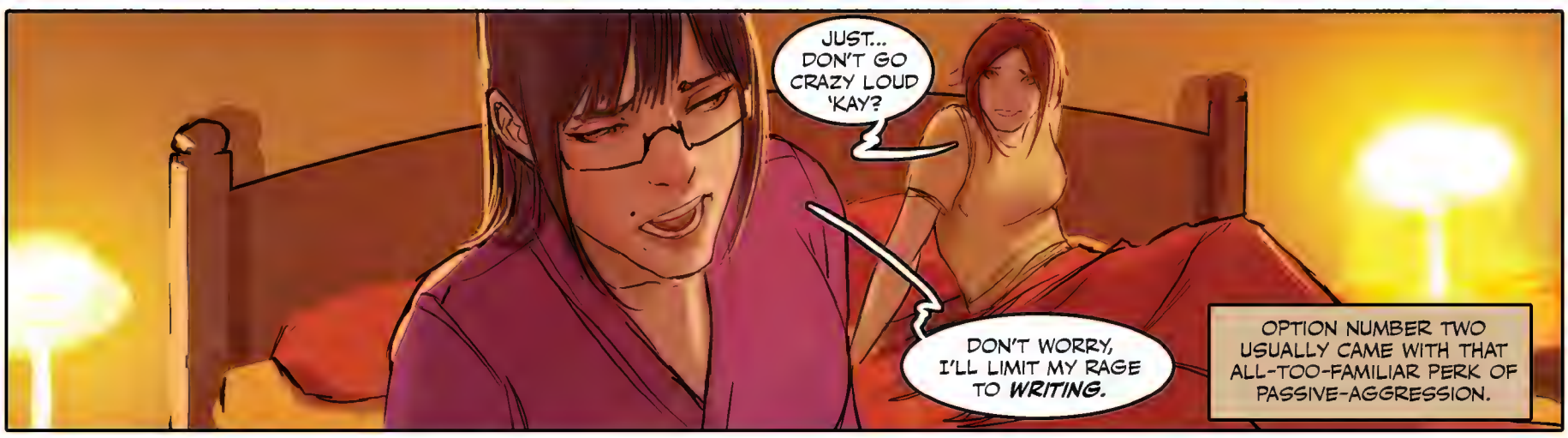
IF YOU CHOSE THE FIRST OPTION, THE ARGUMENT ***MIGHT*** MAKE A COMEBACK SOMEDAY OR IT MIGHT NOT....

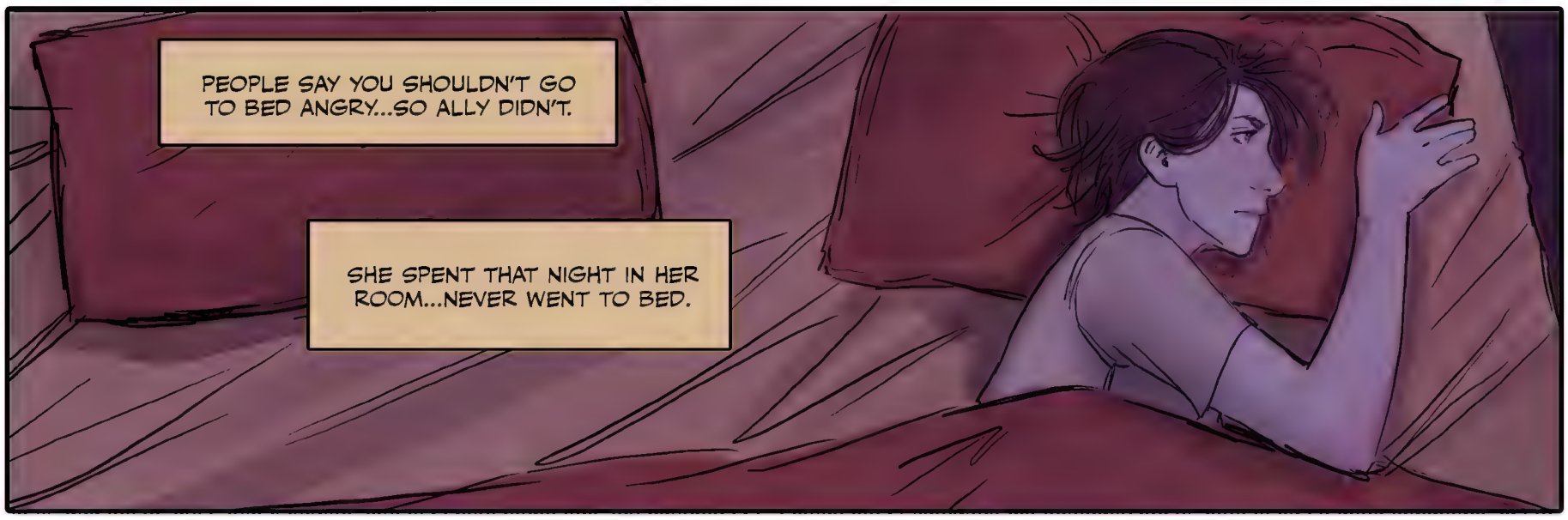
BUT IF YOU CHOSE TO JUST MOVE ON...IT ***WILL*** COME BACK, AND NOT TO MERELY BITE YOU ***ON*** THE ASS. IT WILL BITE YOUR ASS ***OFF***, SPIT IT OUT AND SET IT ON FIRE.

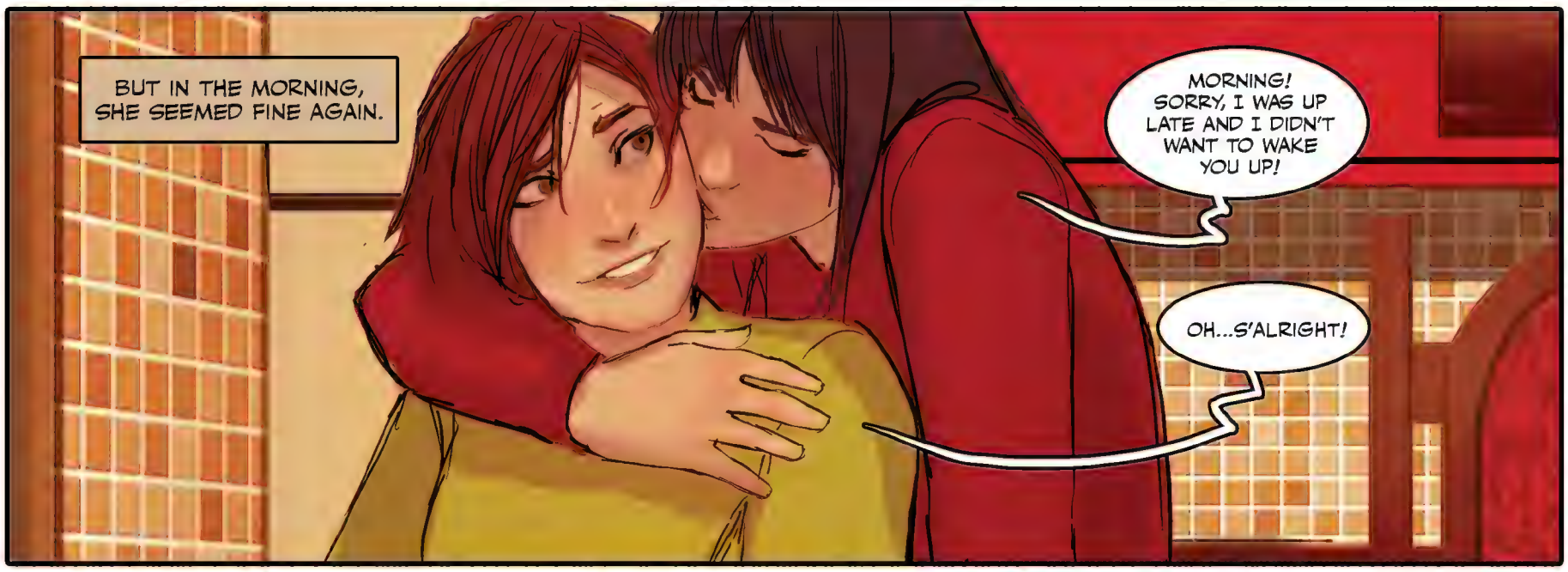
IT IS A BULLET UNFIRED... A SHEATHED DAGGER... AND IT WILL HURT YOU SOME DAY.

AHEM...WITH REGARDS TO OUR OWN LITTLE MISUNDERSTANDING, WE CHOSE OPTION NUMBER 2.






PEOPLE SAY YOU SHOULDN'T GO TO BED ANGRY...SO ALLY DIDN'T.
SHE SPENT THAT NIGHT IN HER ROOM...NEVER WENT TO BED.

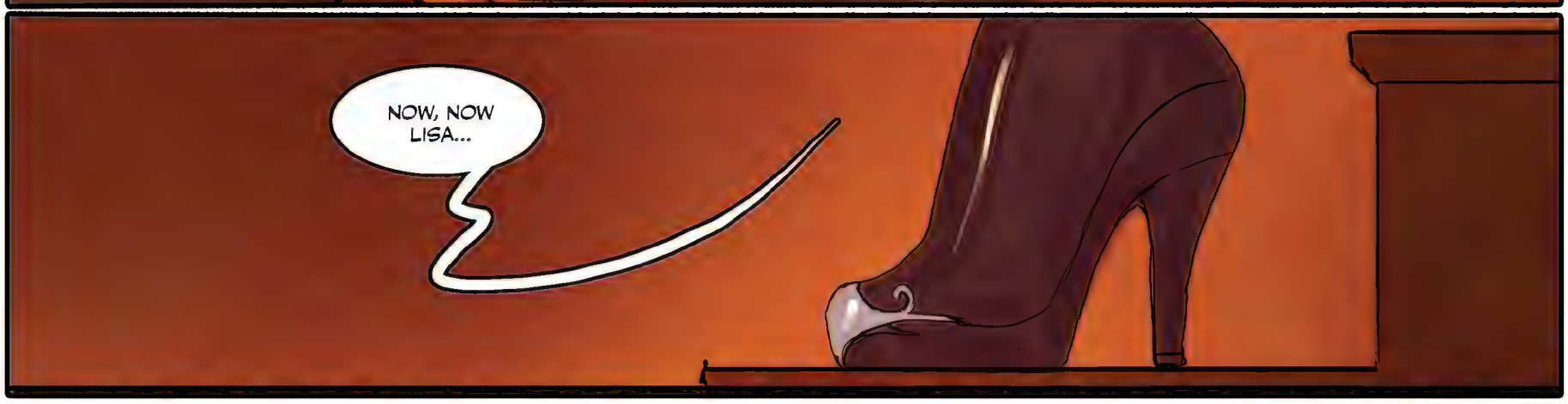

BUT IN THE MORNING, SHE SEEMED FINE AGAIN.
MORNING! SORRY, I WAS UP LATE AND I DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE YOU UP!
OH...S'ALRIGHT!

THURSDAY WAS A NICE DAY; UNEVENTFUL, BUT NICE.

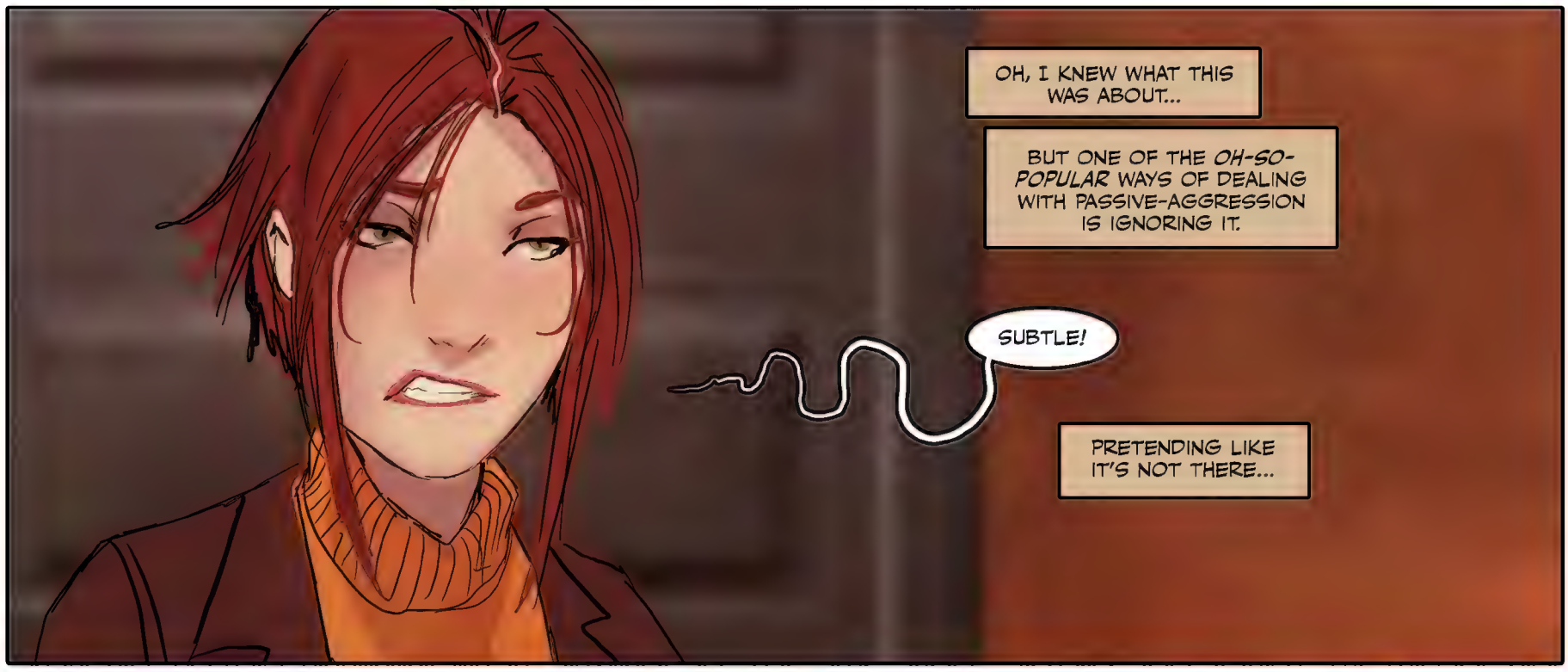
ALLY WAS BACK TO HER OLD SELF.

AND BY THE END OF IT, I FORGOT THE WHOLE STORY THING...

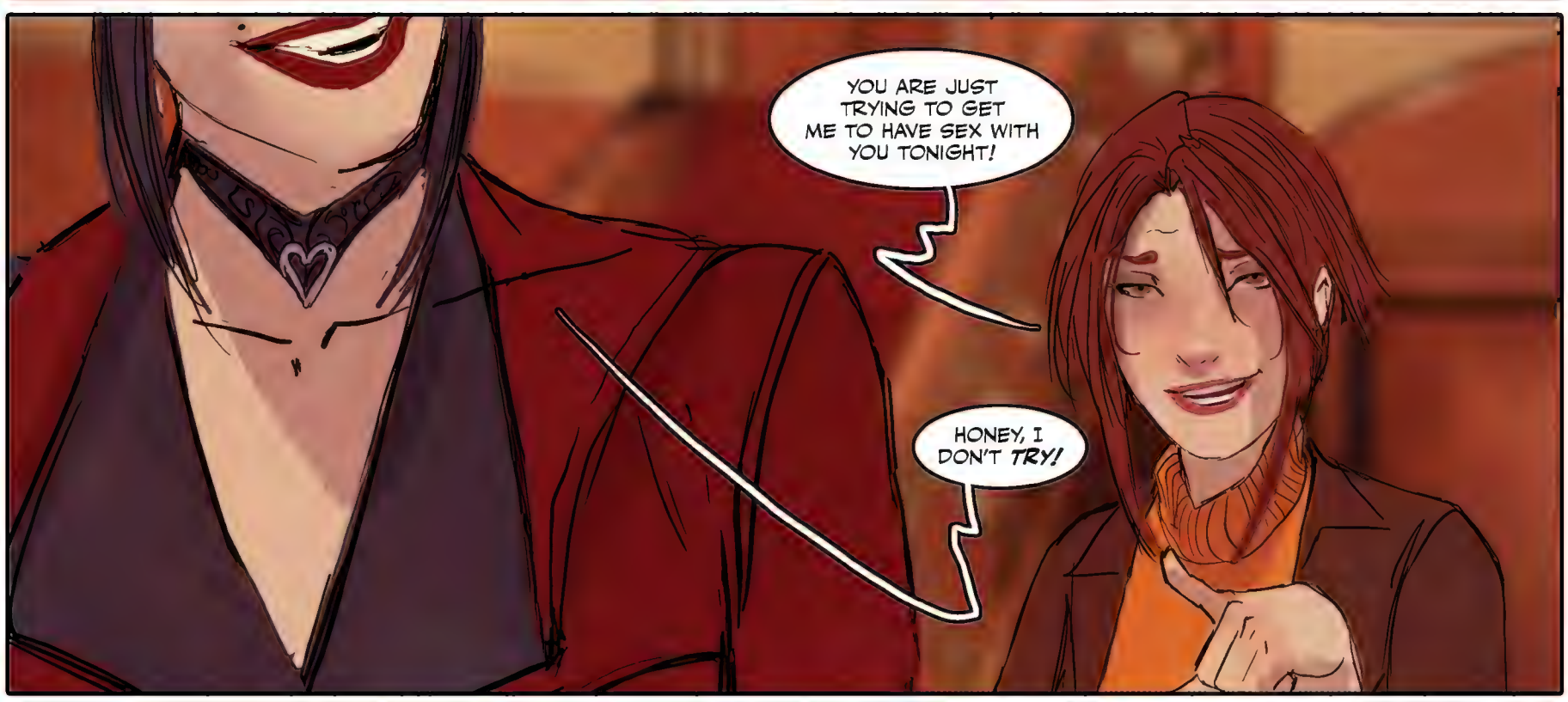
FRIDAY, HOWEVER, ALLY MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT SHE HAD NOT.
HEY, ALLY, MOVE IT OR LOSE IT!


NOW, NOW LISA...

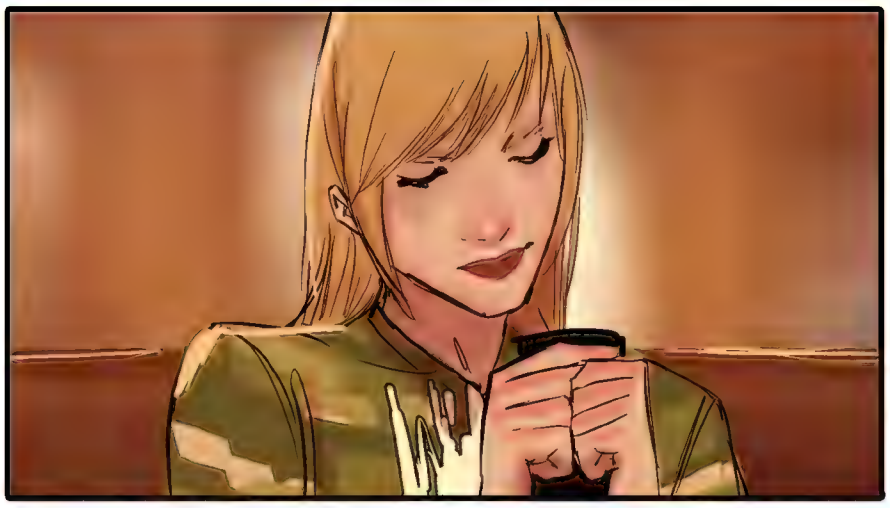
HAVEN'T YOU EVER HEARD OF BEING "FASHIONABLY LATE?"
AH, PASSIVE-AGGRESSION... WHEN YOU COULD SAY WHAT BOTHERS YOU, BUT INSTEAD YOU CHOOSE TO BE A BIT OF A *DICK* ABOUT IT...


OH, I KNEW WHAT THIS WAS ABOUT...
BUT ONE OF THE *OH-SO-POPULAR* WAYS OF DEALING WITH PASSIVE-AGGRESSION IS IGNORING IT.
SUBTLE!
PRETENDING LIKE IT'S NOT THERE...

I MEAN...THAT TACTIC WAS WORKING SPLENDIDLY FOR OUR FEELINGS.
YES, *SARCASM!*
YOUR FRIEND IS EXPECTING TO MEET A *DOMINATRIX*...
I WOULD HATE TO *DISAPPOINT* HER!

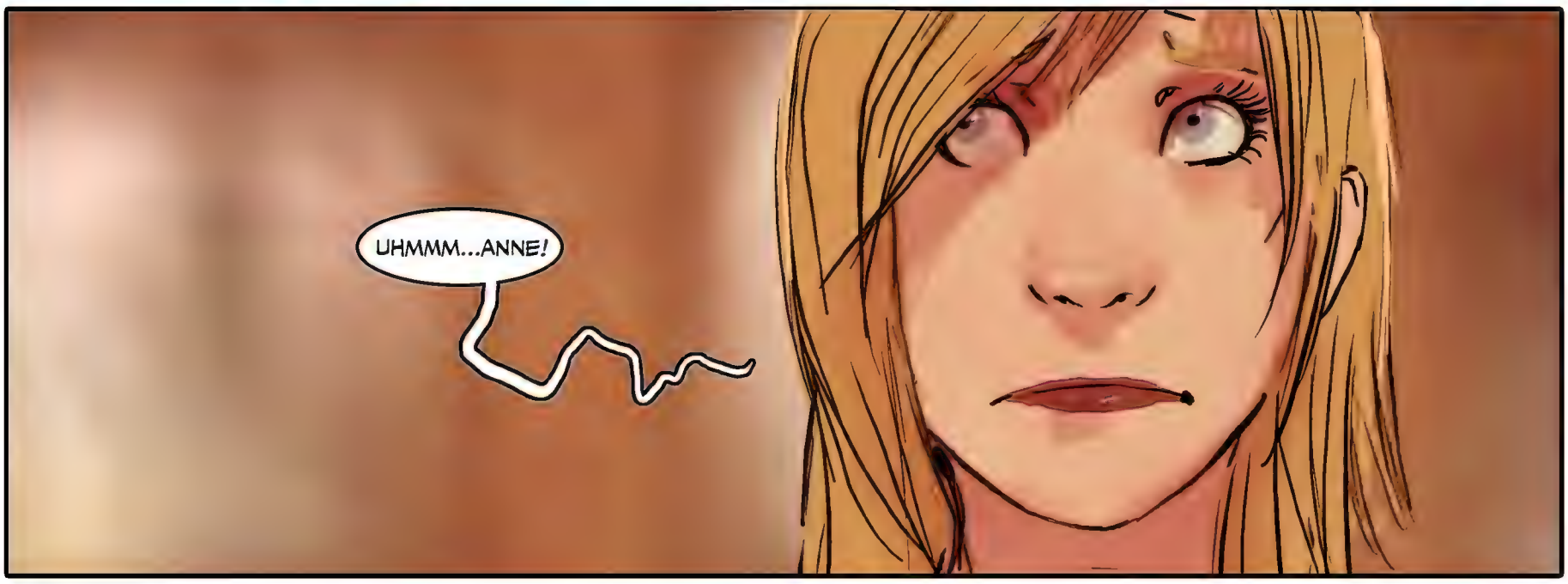

YOU ARE JUST TRYING TO GET ME TO HAVE SEX WITH YOU TONIGHT!
HONEY, I DON'T *TRY!*

HOT!
ALSO...*DAMN IT* I *LOVE* IT WHEN SHE CALLS ME *HONEY!*



YEP! HEY, ANNE!

WE FINALLY MEET FACE-TO-FACE! I AM ALLISON!



YOU DON'T STRIKE ME AS AN "ANNE." I THINK I SHALL CALL YOU... SARAH!

OH!

AHEM... UMM...I GUESS THAT...

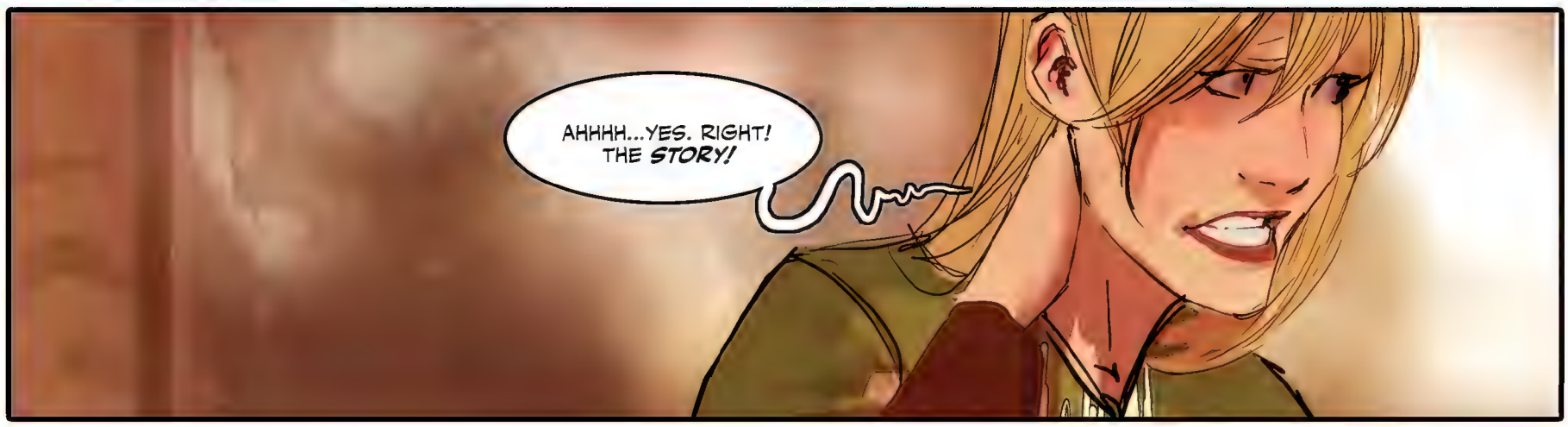
SNORT!

PFFFTTT! BWAHAHAHAHA!!!
NICE ACTIN', BRANDO!

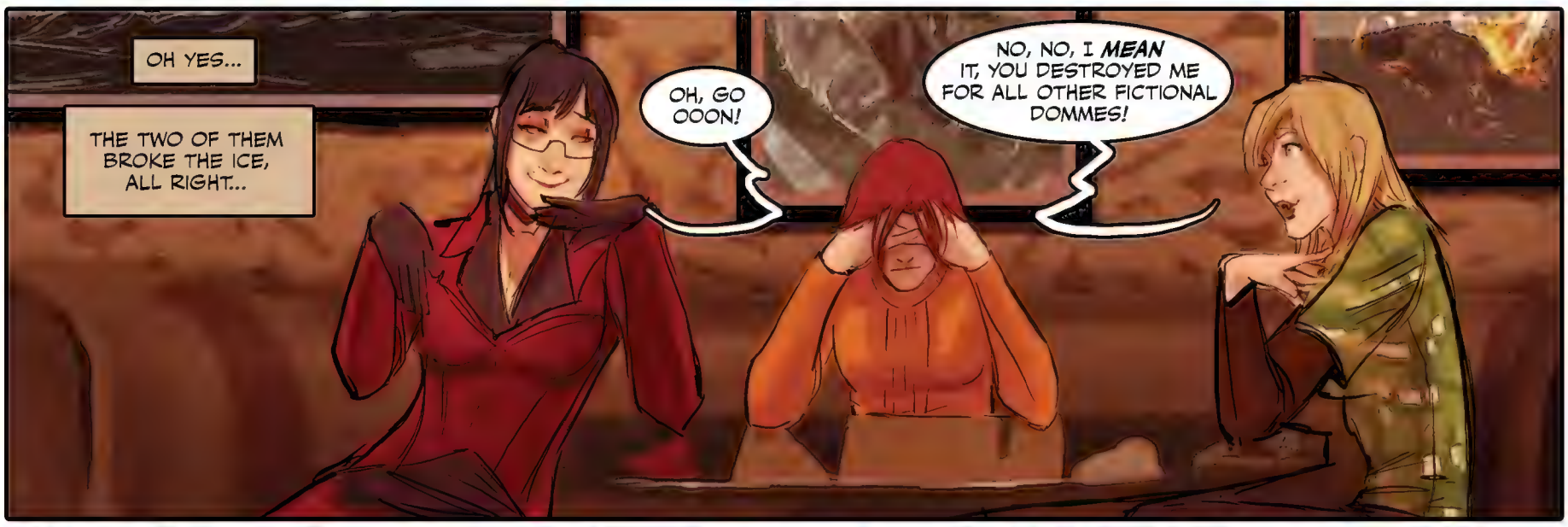
PLAY ALONG, LISA! THIS WILL BE GOOD!
HAHAHA... OH, GOD! I'M SORRY, BUT THE WAY SHE JUST FROZE UP...
TOO PRECIOUS!

UM...HEY? CARE TO LET ME IN ON THE JOKE HERE?

I'M SORRY, ANNE! I'M ALLY, AND THIS HERE WAS MY LITTLE, FEEBLE ATTEMPT AT BREAKING A WHOLE GLACIER OF AWKWARD ICE MY "FRIEND" HERE PLACED BETWEEN US!


AHHHH...YES. RIGHT! THE STORY!

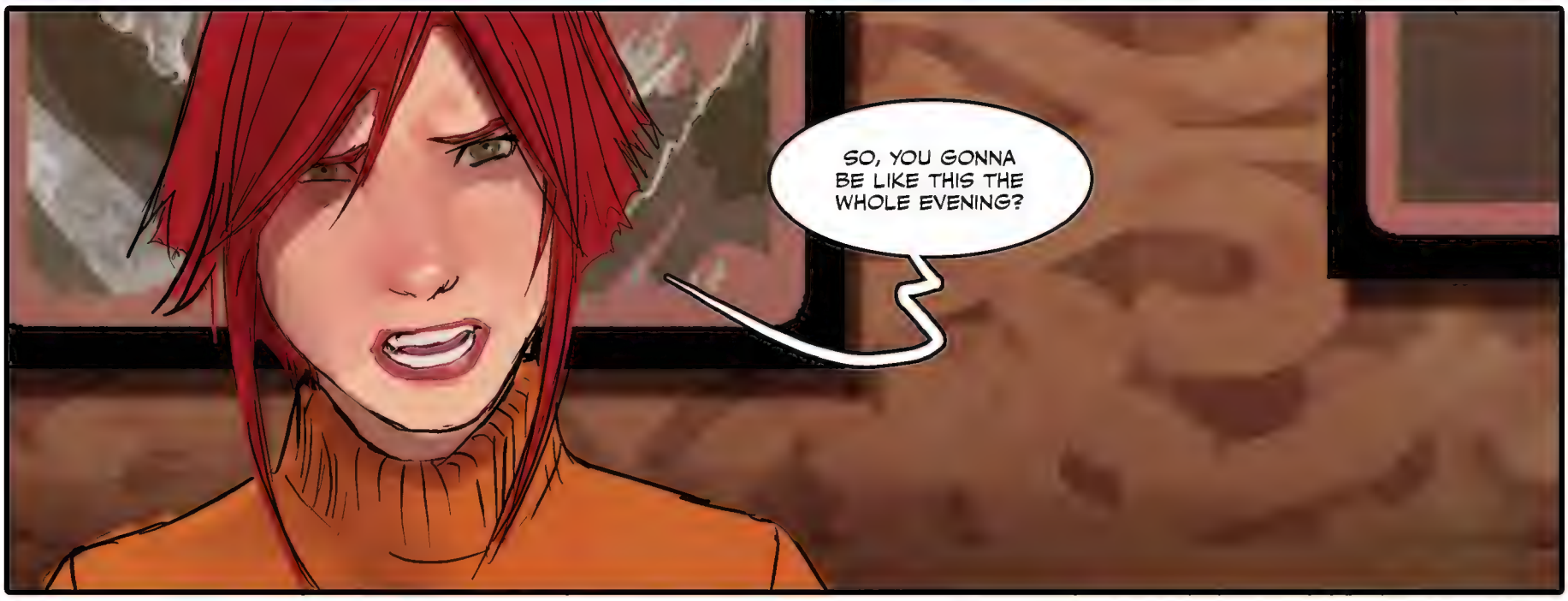
BUT HEY, IT'S NOT BAD. WE HAD CRAZY SEX, THEN WE MET IN PERSON!
IF THAT'S NOT A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR A FRIENDSHIP I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS!
OH, NO, DEFINITELY! YOU WERE AMAZING BY THE WAY!

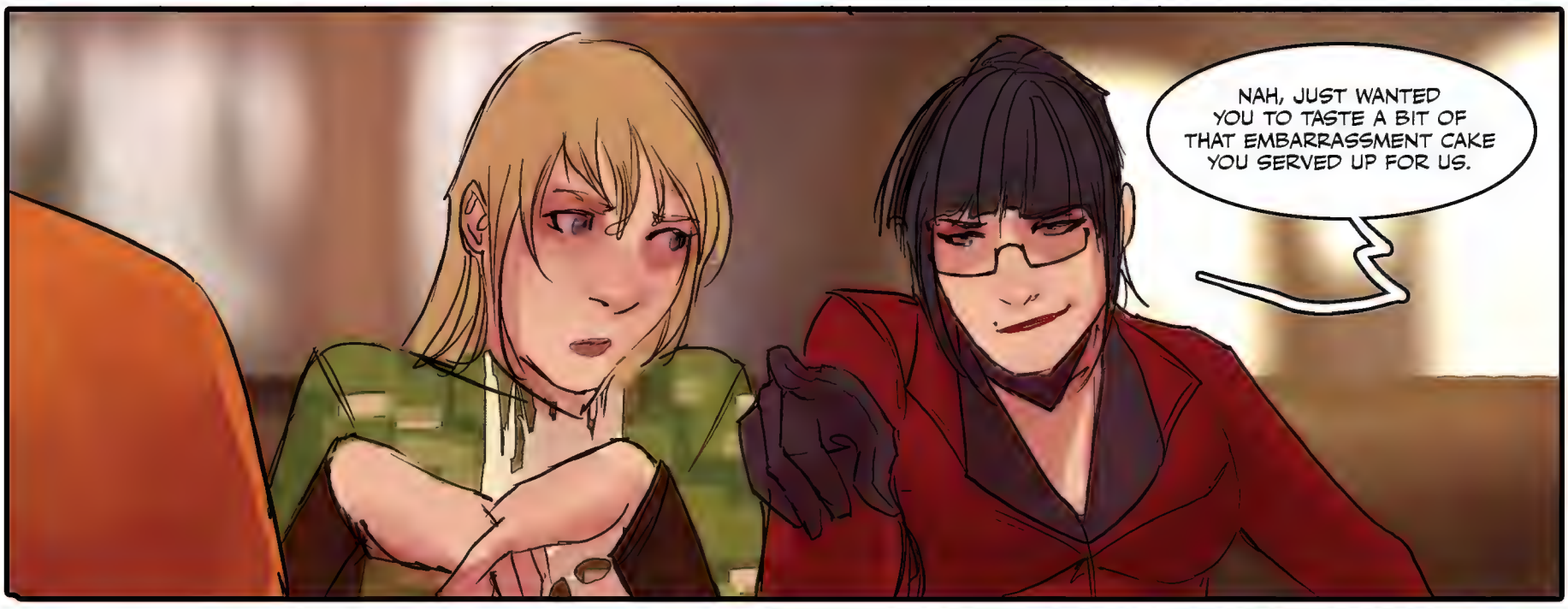

OH YES...
THE TWO OF THEM BROKE THE ICE, ALL RIGHT...
OH, GO OOON!
NO, NO, I MEAN IT, YOU DESTROYED ME FOR ALL OTHER FICTIONAL DOMMES!

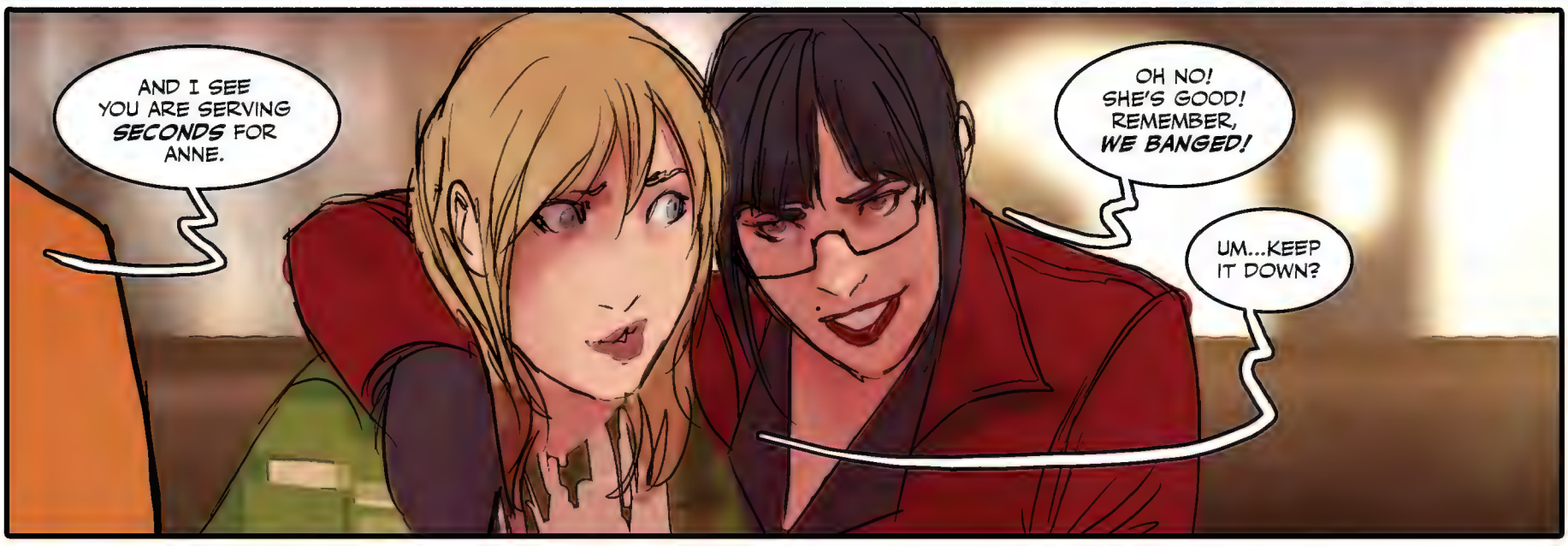
OVER MY BACK!
THAT'S IT! SCOOT OVER! I'M SITTING NEXT TO YOU!

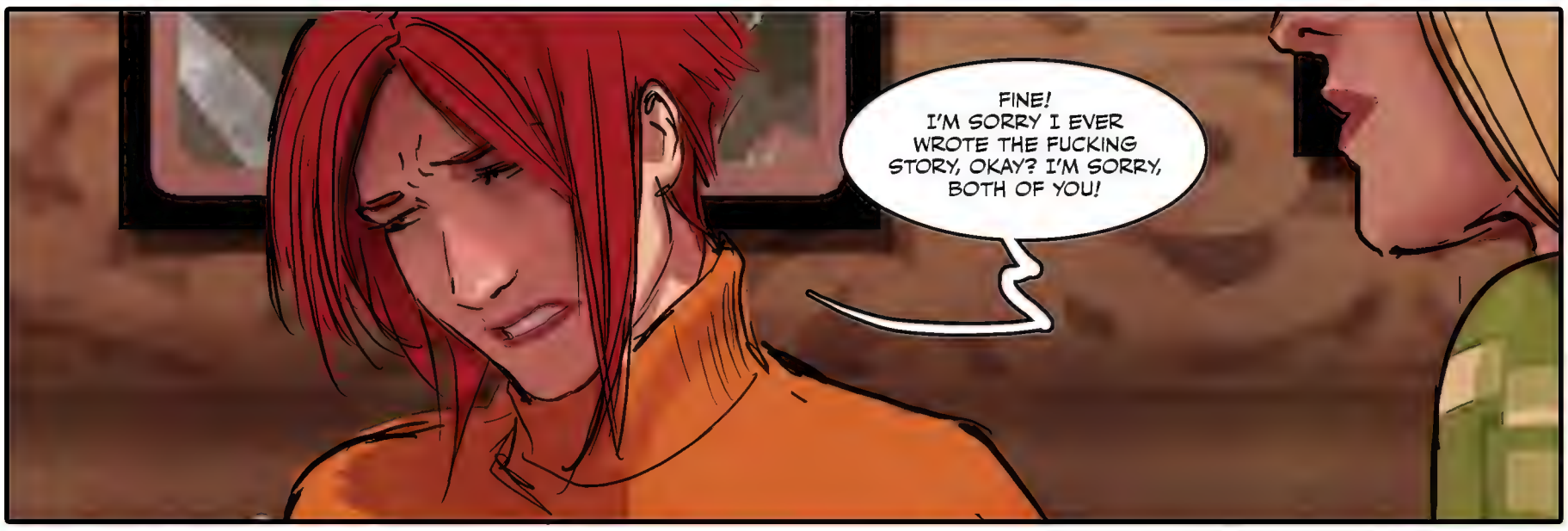
BITCHES!
YOU WERE RIGHT, LISA, I DO LIKE HER!

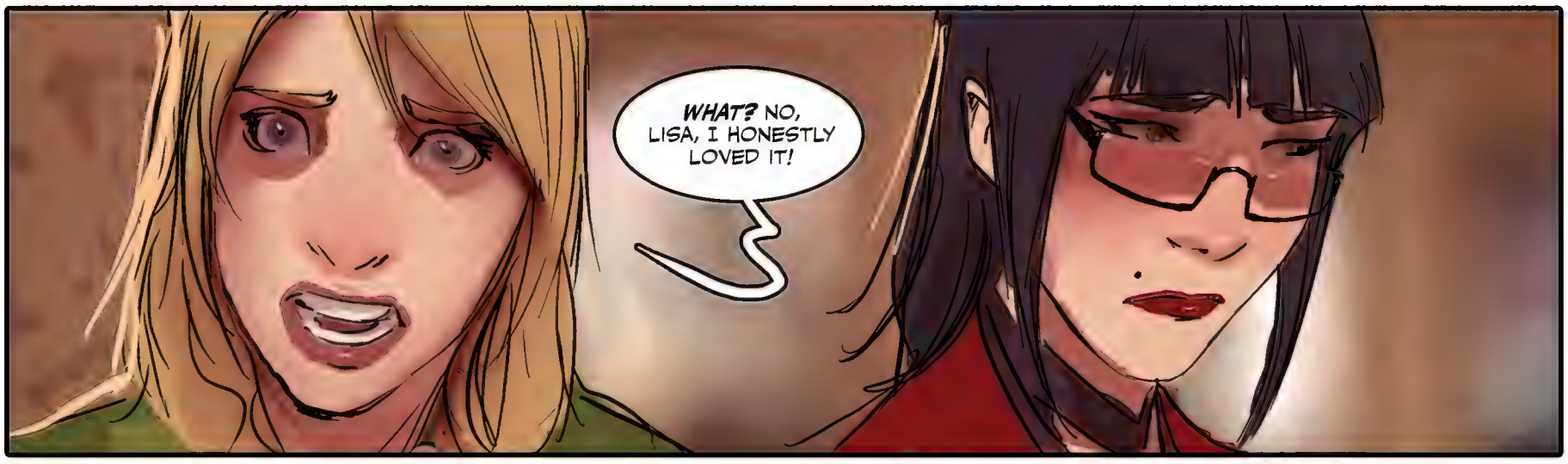
I'M TAKING HER HOME!
SAY WHAT NOW?
I THINK I'VE GOT A COLLAR IN HERE SOMEWHERE.


SO, YOU GONNA BE LIKE THIS THE WHOLE EVENING?

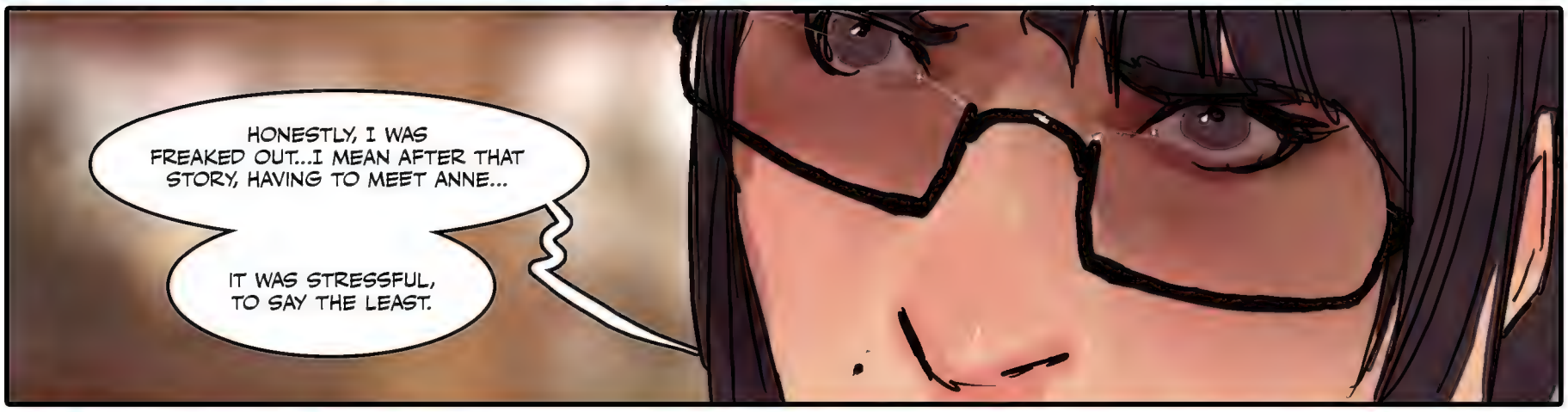

NAH, JUST WANTED YOU TO TASTE A BIT OF THAT EMBARRASSMENT CAKE YOU SERVED UP FOR US.

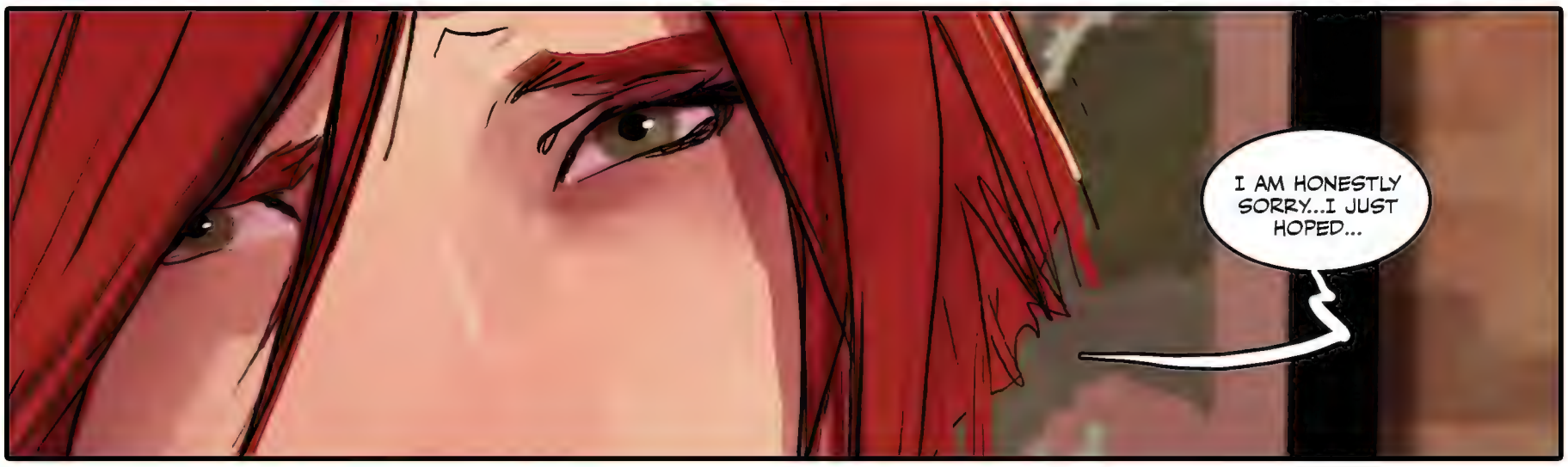

AND I SEE YOU ARE SERVING *SECONDS* FOR ANNE.
OH NO! SHE'S GOOD! REMEMBER, *WE BANGED!*
UM...KEEP IT DOWN?


FINE! I'M SORRY I EVER WROTE THE FUCKING STORY, OKAY? I'M SORRY, BOTH OF YOU!

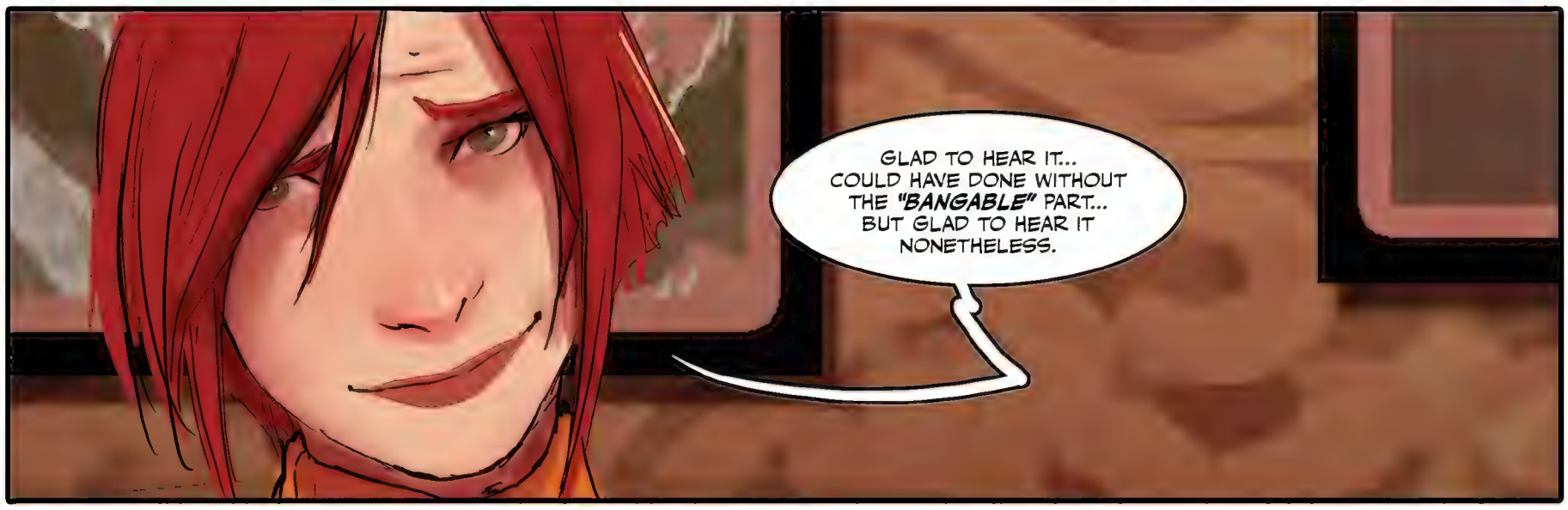

WHAT? NO, LISA, I HONESTLY LOVED IT!

AS DID I!

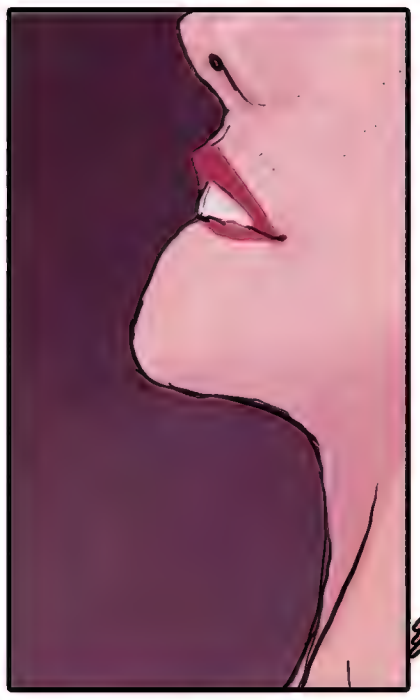

HONESTLY, I WAS FREAKED OUT...I MEAN AFTER THAT STORY, HAVING TO MEET ANNE...
IT WAS STRESSFUL, TO SAY THE LEAST.


I AM HONESTLY SORRY...I JUST HOPED...

HOOOWEEEVEEER...
AFTER MEETING HER... I THINK WE CAN KISS THE AWKWARDNESS GOODBYE!
SHE SEEMS NICE, AND VERY BANGABLE.


GLAD TO HEAR IT... COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT THE "BANGABLE" PART... BUT GLAD TO HEAR IT NONETHELESS.

GOOD...NOW THAT THAT IS SETTLED...
LISBETH...SARAH... THESE BOOTS AIN'T GONNA LICK THEMSELVES!



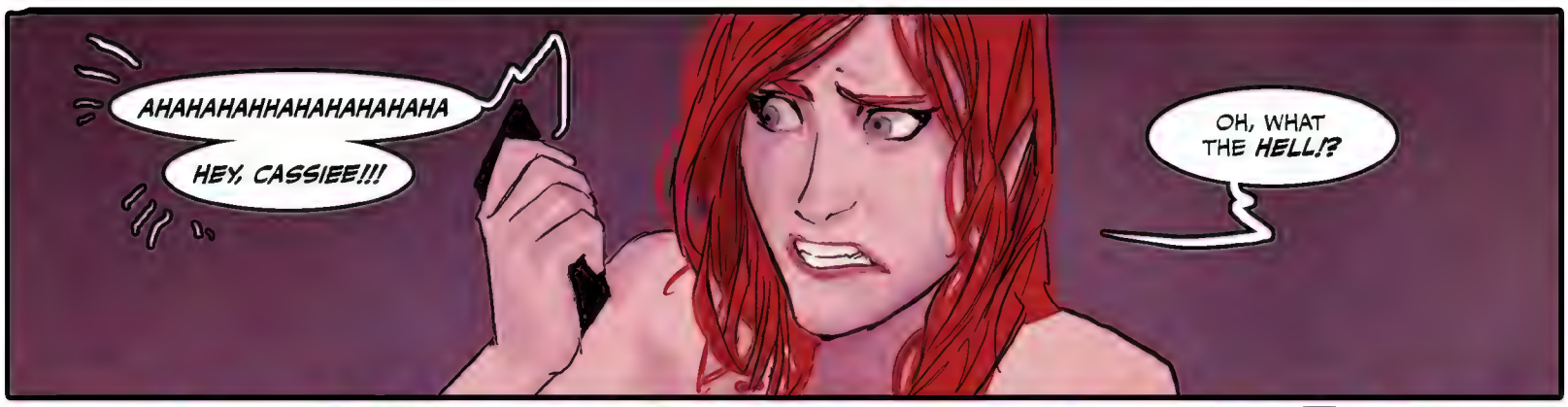
MMMMMM...
BA-RING

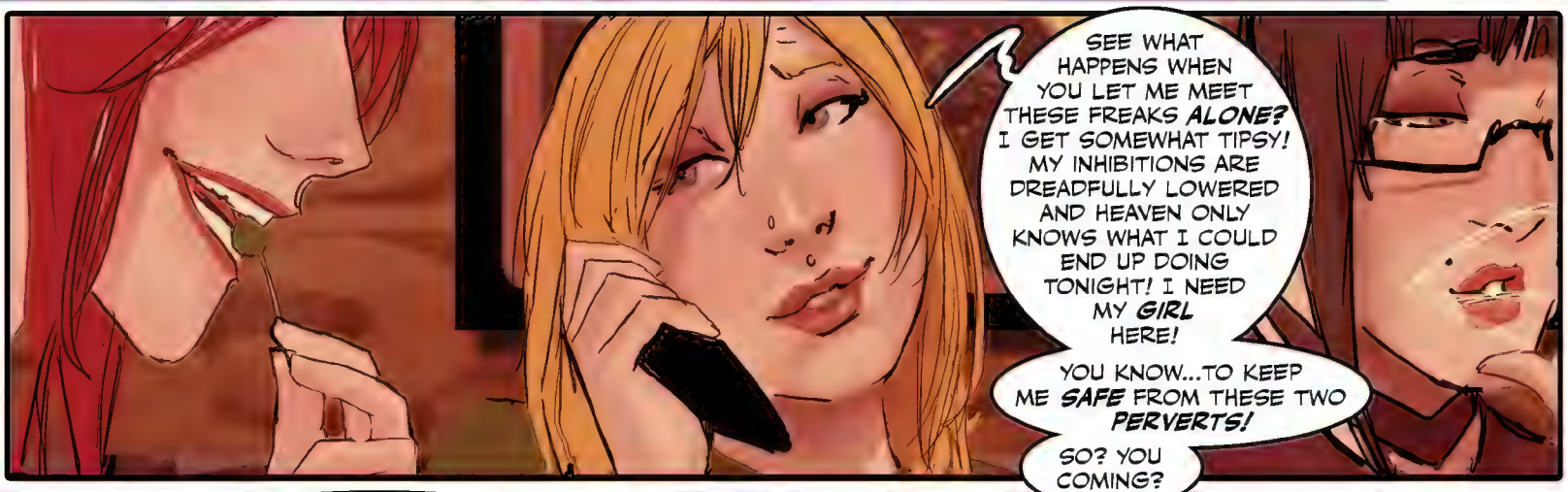
OH, COME OOOON!
ANSWER IT! IT COULD BE THEM!

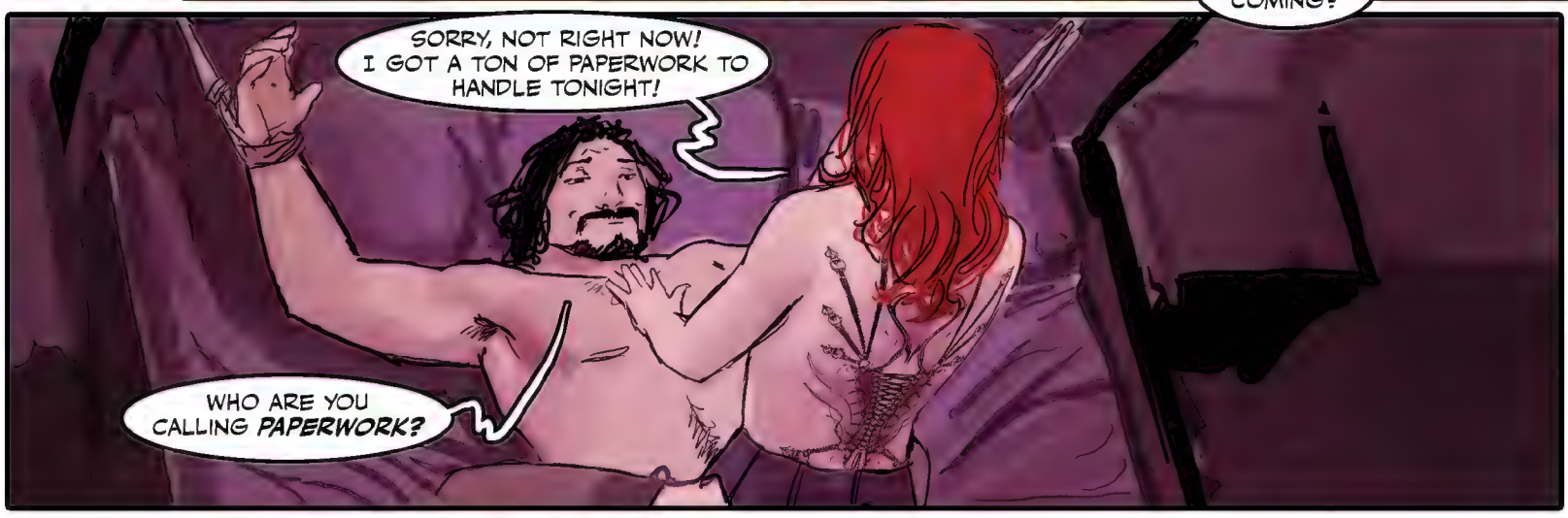
NAH, IT'S JUST ANNE.
DAMN...OH CAN YOU SCRATCH MY NOSE?

HEY, ANNE! LISTEN, I'M A...

OKAY...IN OUR DEFENSE, WE WERE DRUNK... ANNND WE THOUGHT THIS WAS HILARIOUS.
KAZZAAAAAAAAAAP


AHAHAHAHHAHAHAHAHAHA
HEY, CASSIEE!!!
OH, WHAT THE HELL!?

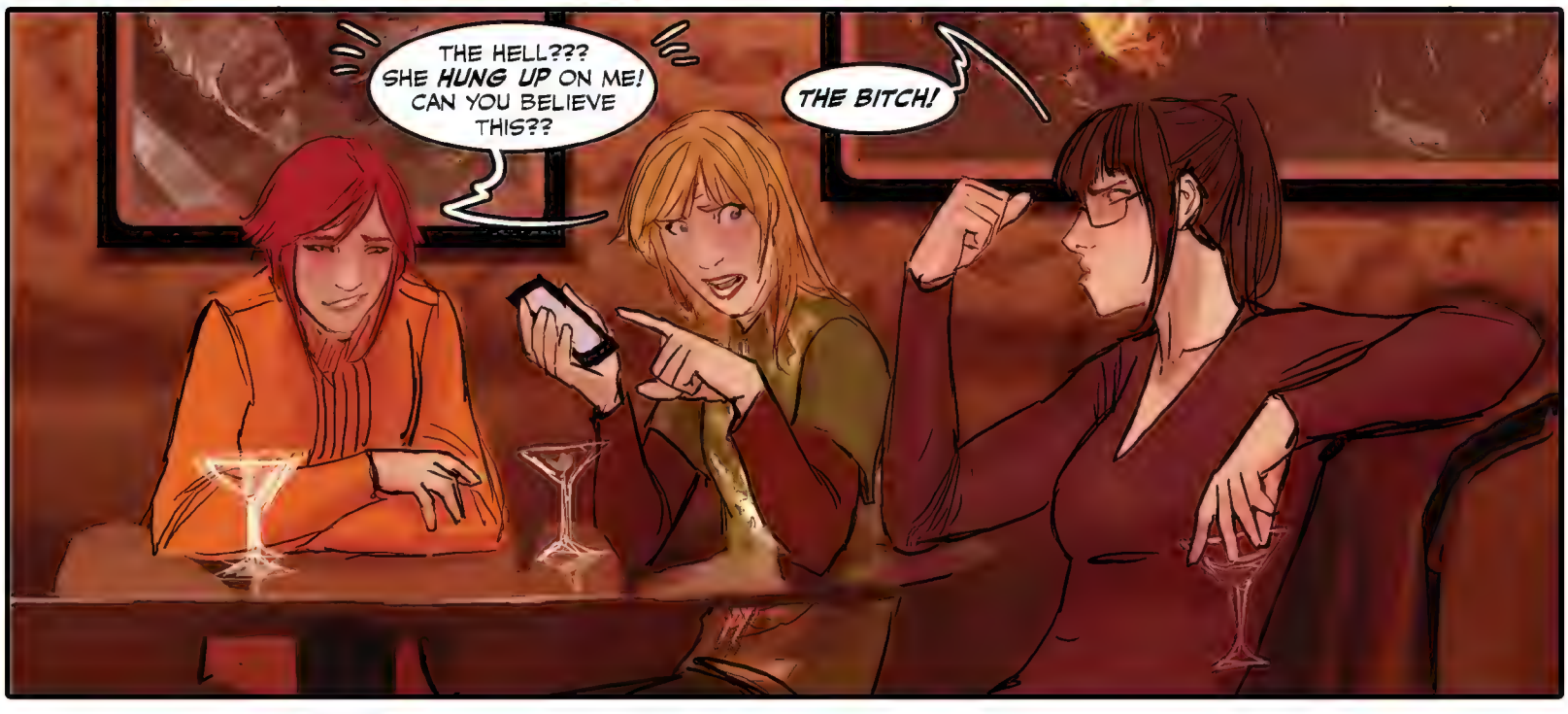

SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LET ME MEET THESE FREAKS ALONE? I GET SOMEWHAT TIPSY! MY INHIBITIONS ARE DREADFULLY LOWERED AND HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WHAT I COULD END UP DOING TONIGHT! I NEED MY GIRL HERE!
YOU KNOW...TO KEEP ME SAFE FROM THESE TWO PERVERTS!
SO? YOU COMING?

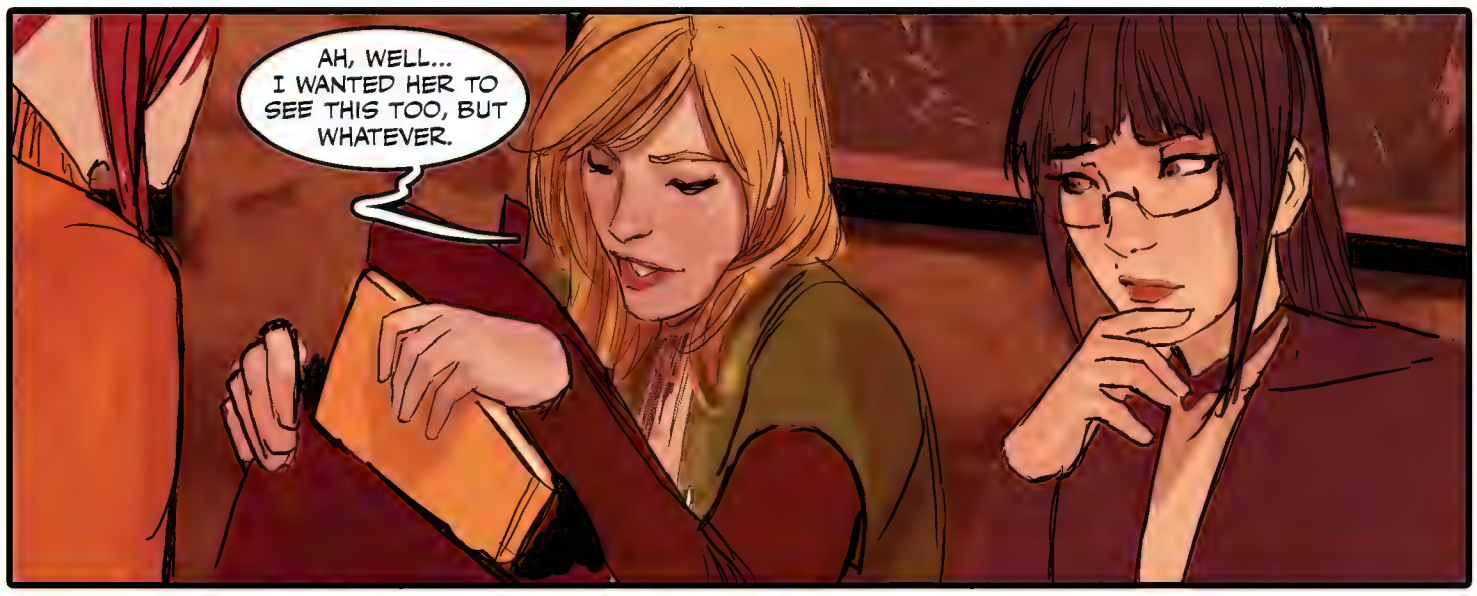

SORRY, NOT RIGHT NOW! I GOT A TON OF PAPERWORK TO HANDLE TONIGHT!
WHO ARE YOU CALLING PAPERWORK?

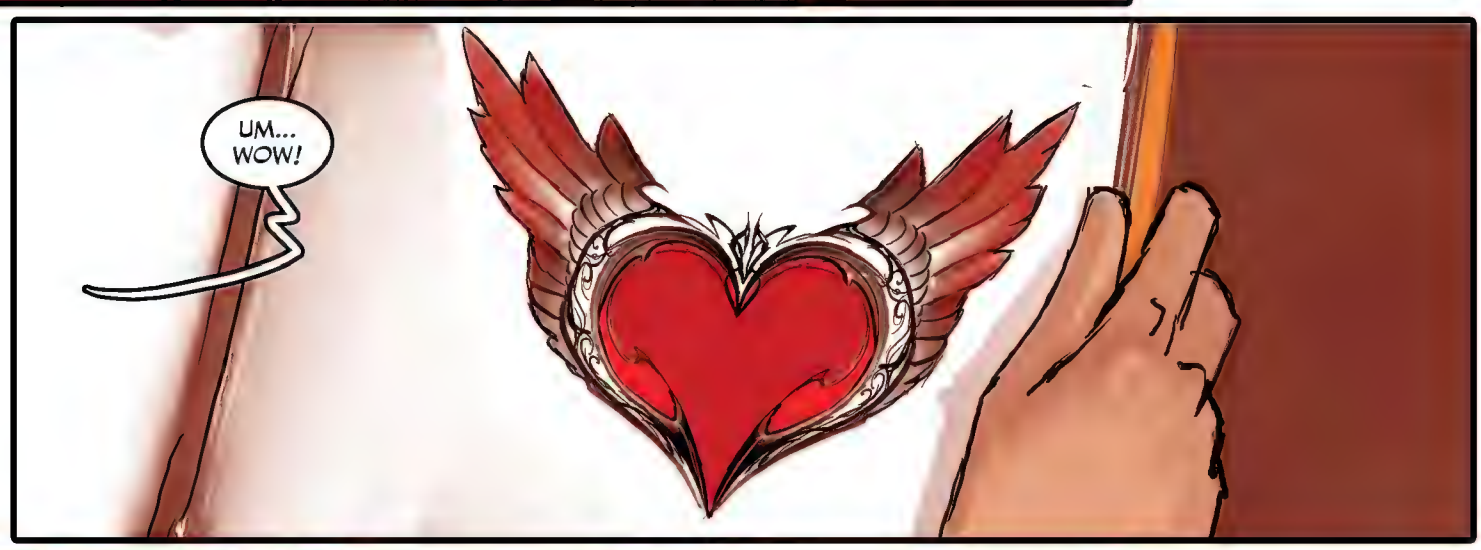
OH, COME ON, PLEASE COME!
PLEEEAAASE!!!

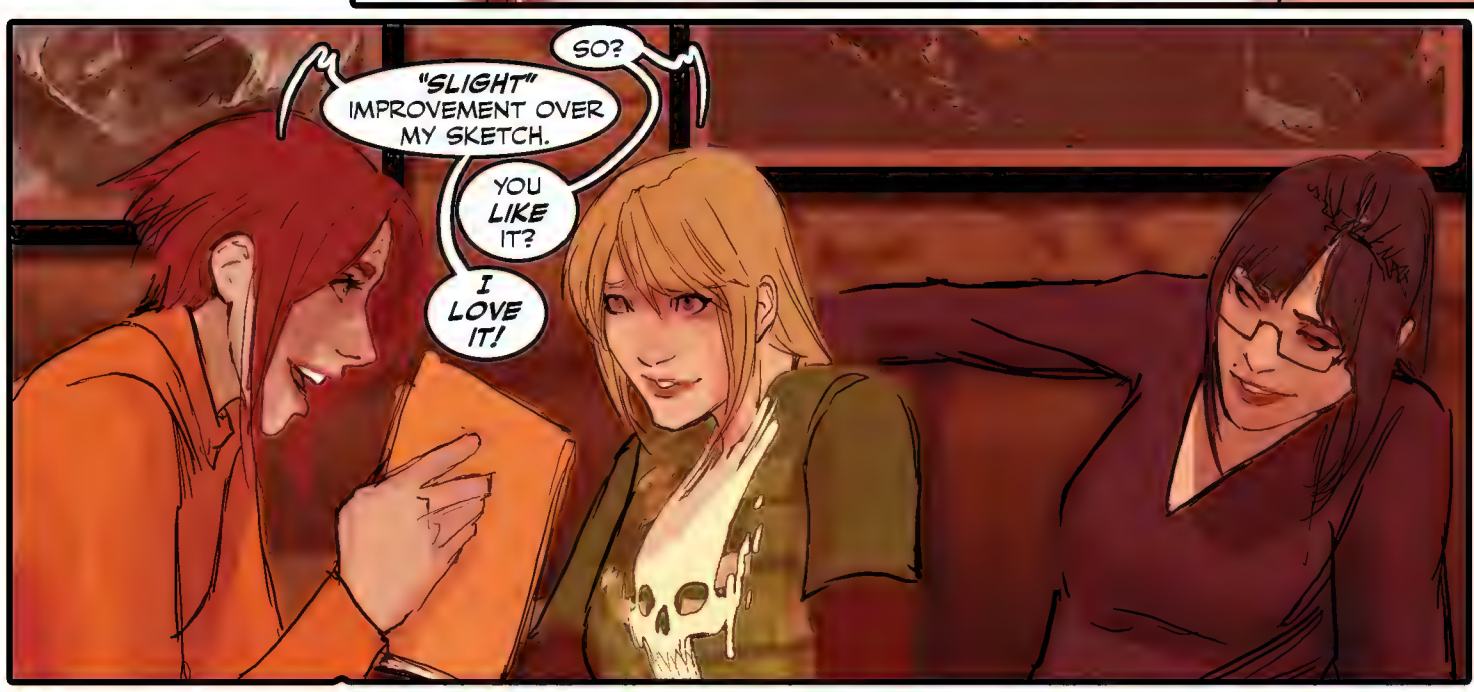
NO!
PLEASE!
NO
PLEASE.

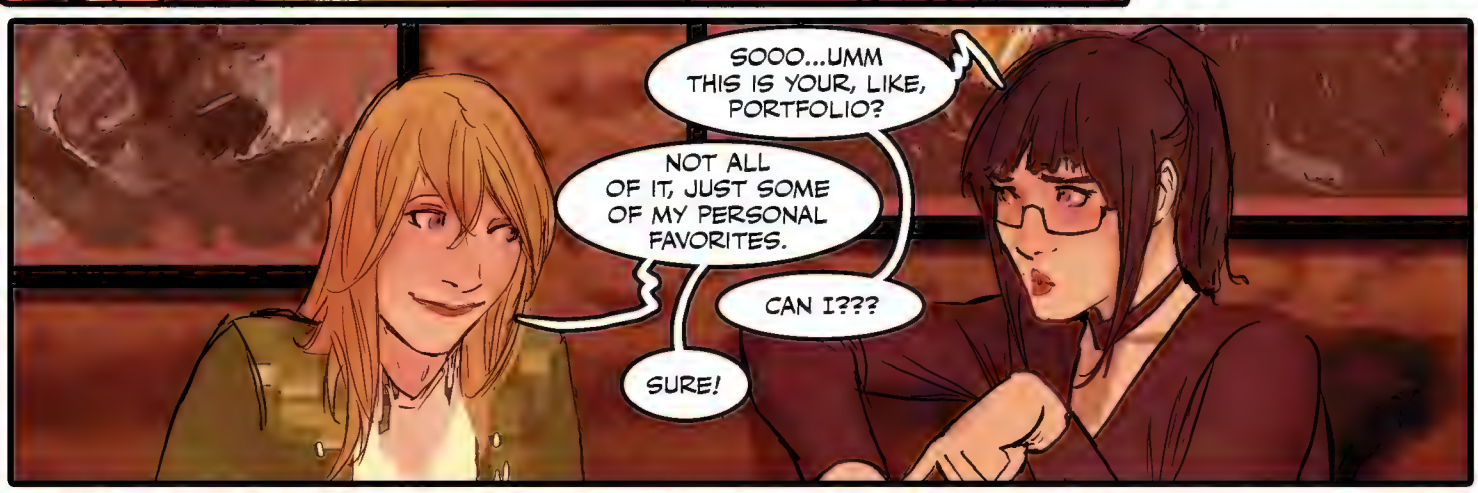
IDIOTS!
CLICK

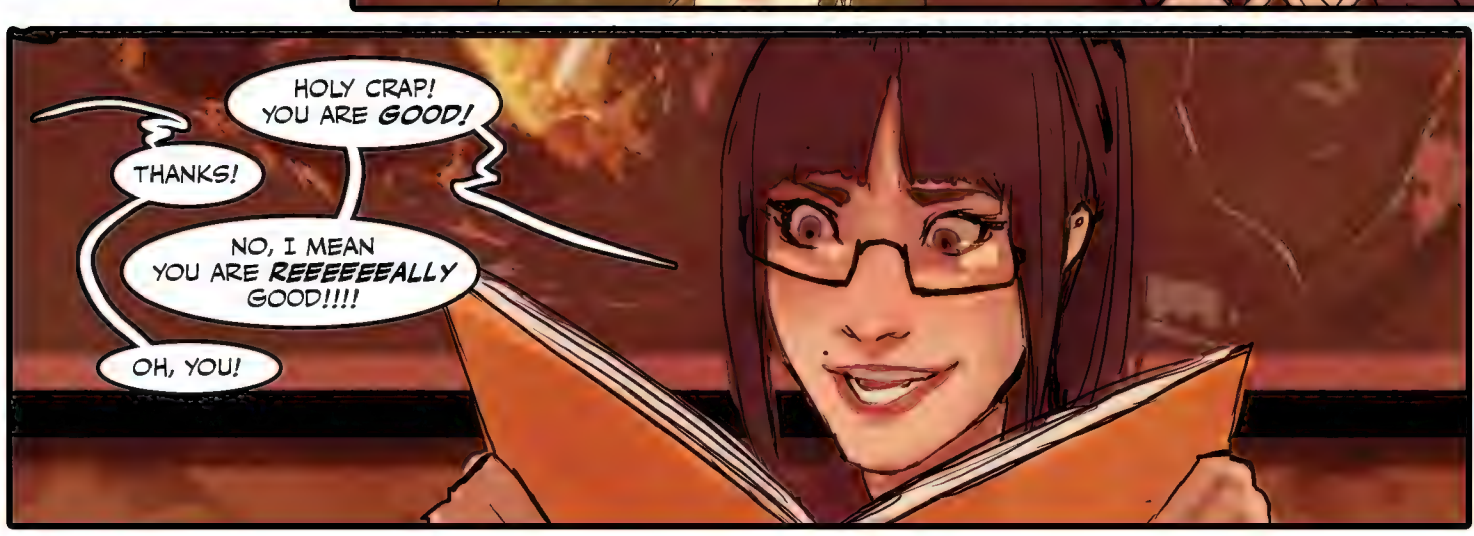

THE HELL??? SHE HUNG UP ON ME! CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS??
THE BITCH!


AH, WELL... I WANTED HER TO SEE THIS TOO, BUT WHATEVER.


UM... WOW!

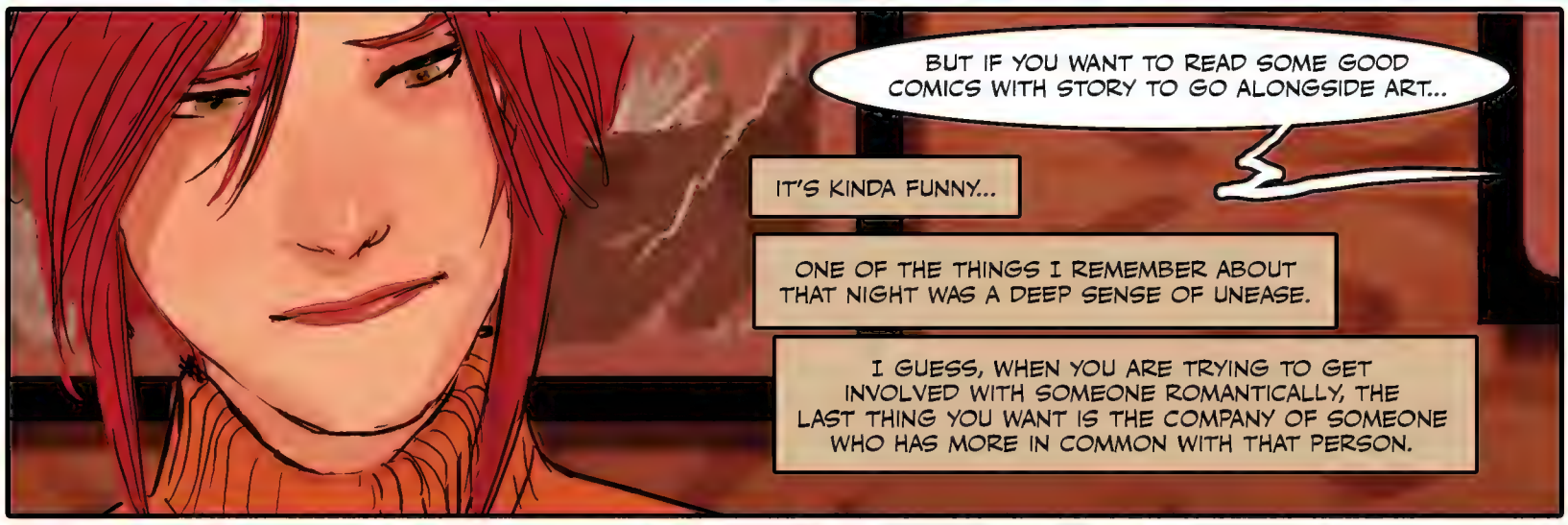

SO?
"SLIGHT" IMPROVEMENT OVER MY SKETCH.
YOU LIKE IT?
I LOVE IT!

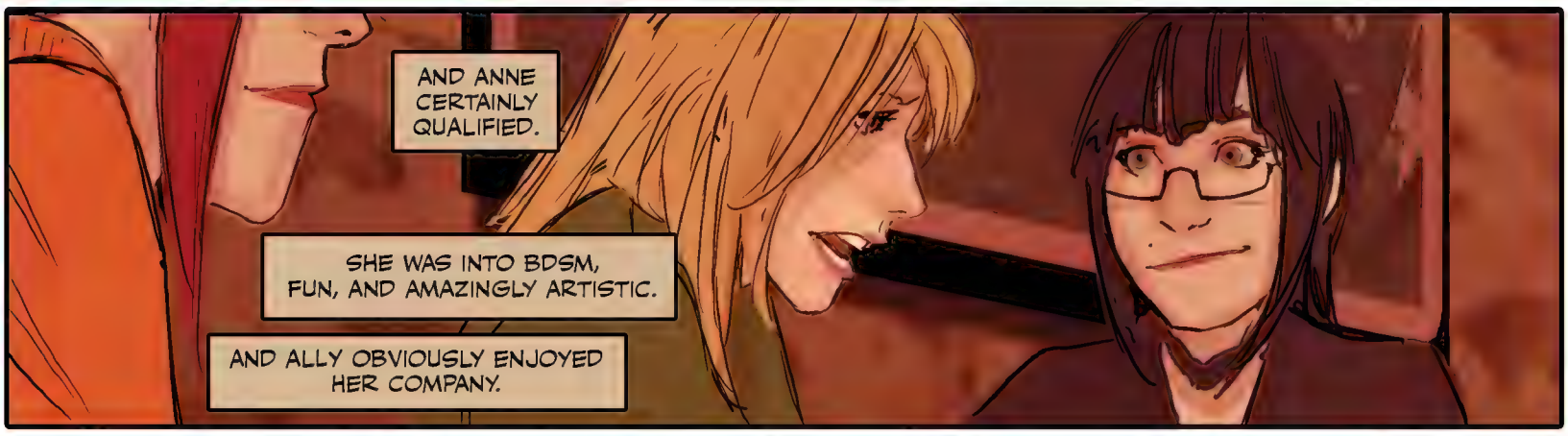

SOOO...UMM THIS IS YOUR, LIKE, PORTFOLIO?
NOT ALL OF IT, JUST SOME OF MY PERSONAL FAVORITES.
CAN I???
SURE!

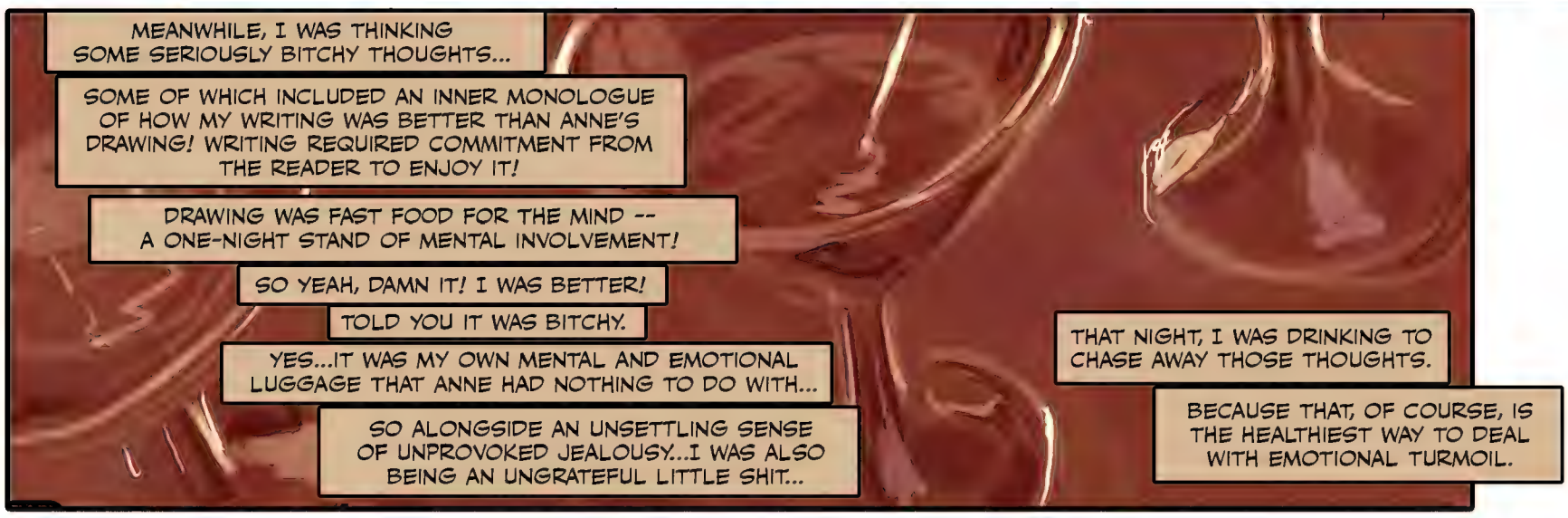

HOLY CRAP! YOU ARE GOOD!
THANKS!
NO, I MEAN YOU ARE REEEEEEALLY GOOD!!!!
OH, YOU!

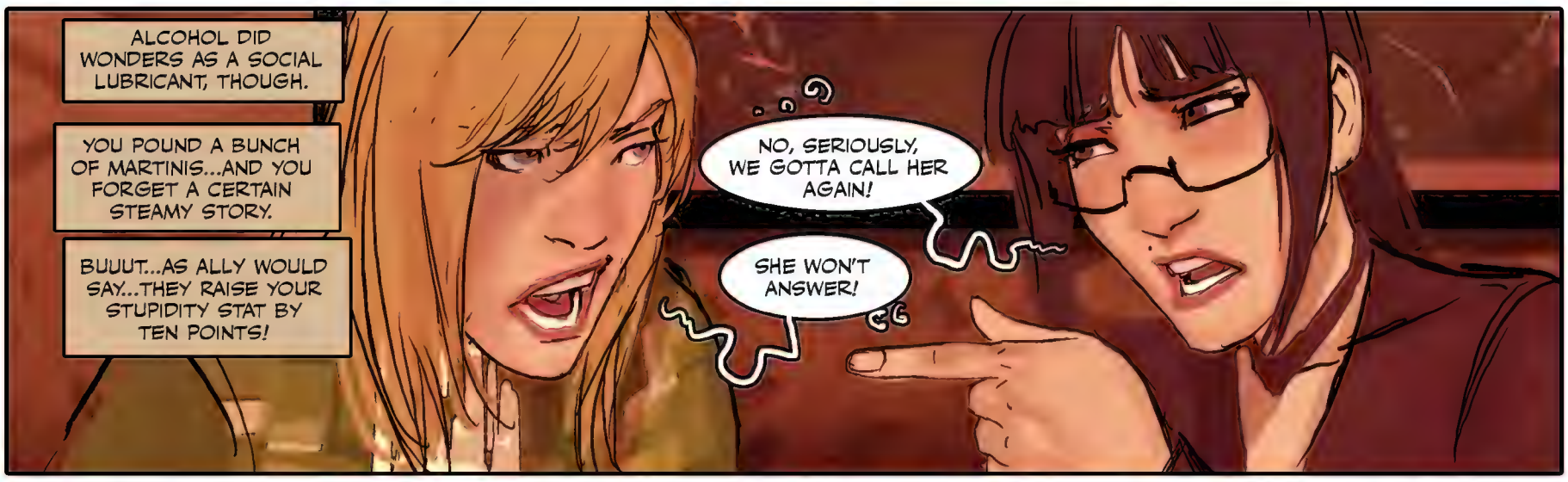
HEY! I KNOW THIS COMIC!!!
YEAH, I GET A BUTTLOAD OF ORDERS TO TATTOO HER.
HEH. I BET! YOU READ IT?

NAH, I MEAN, I TRIED. I WAS CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT THE DEAL WAS... Y'KNOW, BEYOND THE LOOKS.
YEAH, THERE WAS NEVER MUCH SUBSTANCE IN THAT COMIC...BUT THE ARTWORK WAS GORGEOUS IN THE FIRST FEW ARCS.
NERD!
NOPE! JUST AN ART AFICIONADO!

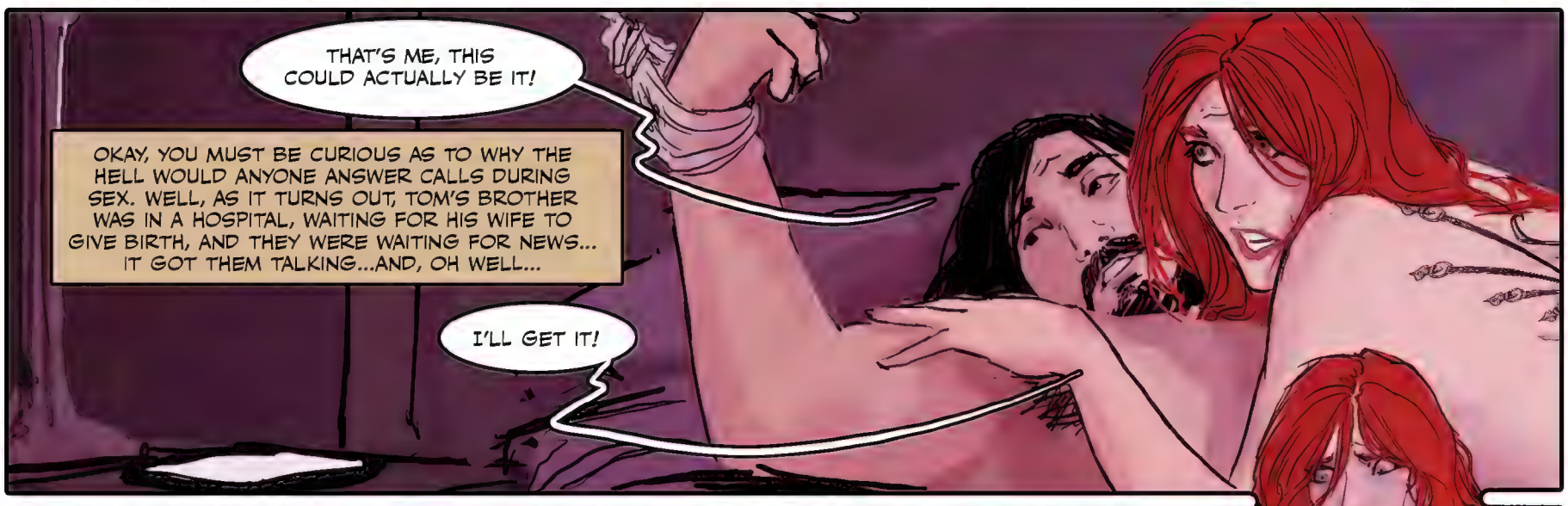

BUT IF YOU WANT TO READ SOME GOOD COMICS WITH STORY TO GO ALONGSIDE ART...
IT'S KINDA FUNNY...
ONE OF THE THINGS I REMEMBER ABOUT THAT NIGHT WAS A DEEP SENSE OF UNEASE.
I GUESS, WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO GET INVOLVED WITH SOMEONE ROMANTICALLY, THE LAST THING YOU WANT IS THE COMPANY OF SOMEONE WHO HAS MORE IN COMMON WITH THAT PERSON.

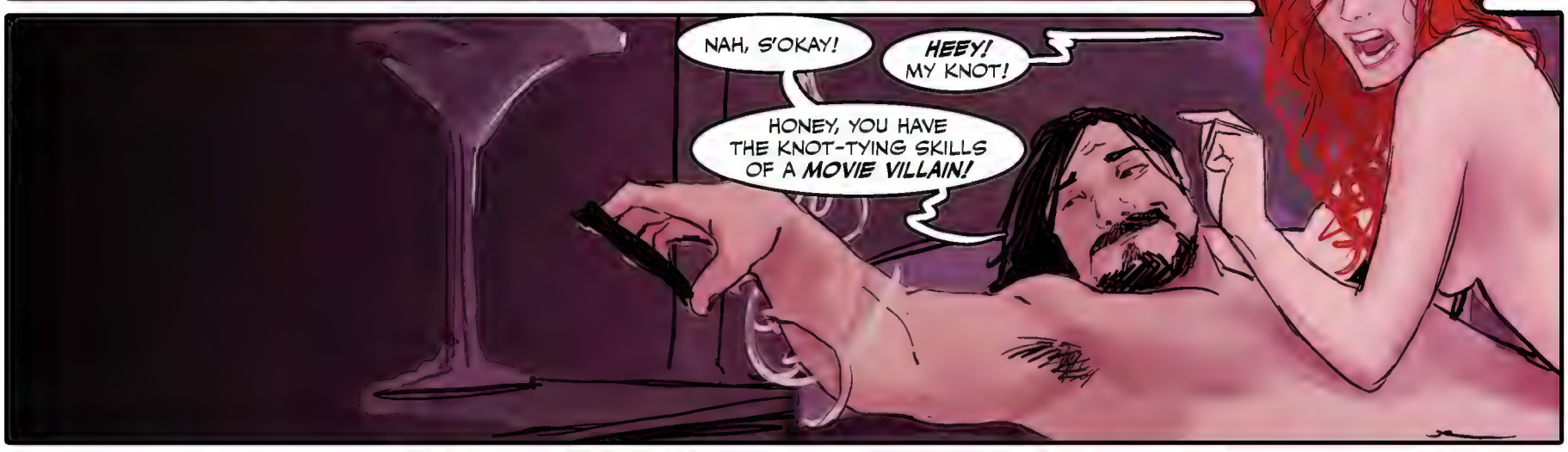

AND ANNE CERTAINLY QUALIFIED.
SHE WAS INTO BDSM, FUN, AND AMAZINGLY ARTISTIC.
AND ALLY OBVIOUSLY ENJOYED HER COMPANY.

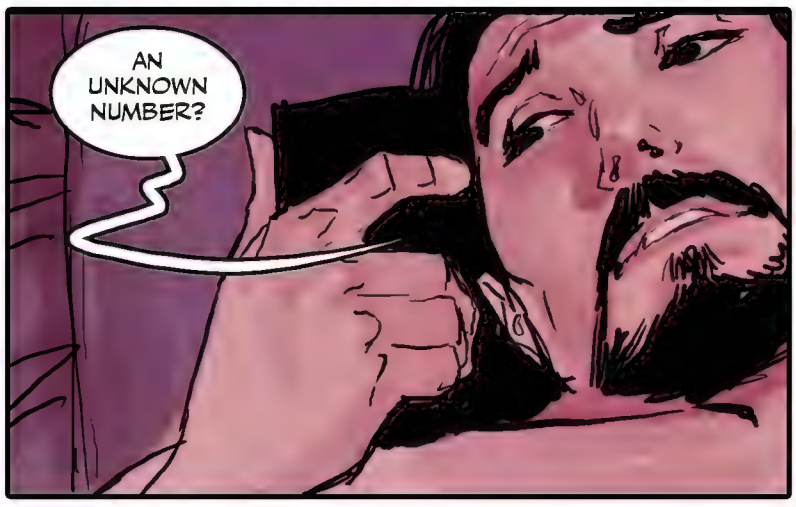

MEANWHILE, I WAS THINKING SOME SERIOUSLY BITCHY THOUGHTS...
SOME OF WHICH INCLUDED AN INNER MONOLOGUE OF HOW MY WRITING WAS BETTER THAN ANNE'S DRAWING! WRITING REQUIRED COMMITMENT FROM THE READER TO ENJOY IT!
DRAWING WAS FAST FOOD FOR THE MIND -- A ONE-NIGHT STAND OF MENTAL INVOLVEMENT!
SO YEAH, DAMN IT! I WAS BETTER!
TOLD YOU IT WAS BITCHY.
YES...IT WAS MY OWN MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL LUGGAGE THAT ANNE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH...
SO ALONGSIDE AN UNSETTLING SENSE OF UNPROVOKED JEALOUSY...I WAS ALSO BEING AN UNGRATEFUL LITTLE SHIT...
THAT NIGHT, I WAS DRINKING TO CHASE AWAY THOSE THOUGHTS.
BECAUSE THAT, OF COURSE, IS THE HEALTHIEST WAY TO DEAL WITH EMOTIONAL TURMOIL.

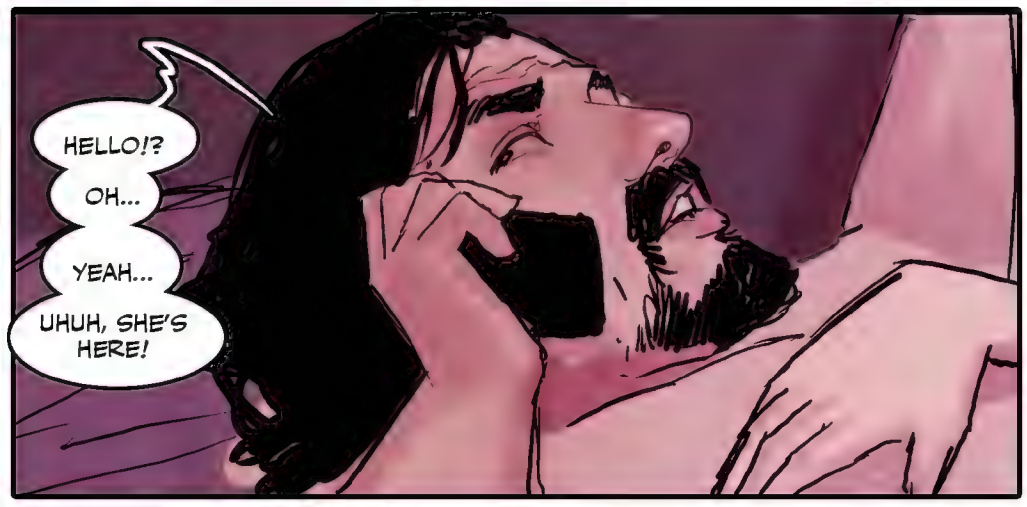

ALCOHOL DID WONDERS AS A SOCIAL LUBRICANT, THOUGH.
YOU POUND A BUNCH OF MARTINIS...AND YOU FORGET A CERTAIN STEAMY STORY.
BUUUT...AS ALLY WOULD SAY...THEY RAISE YOUR STUPIDITY STAT BY TEN POINTS!
NO, SERIOUSLY, WE GOTTA CALL HER AGAIN!
SHE WON'T ANSWER!

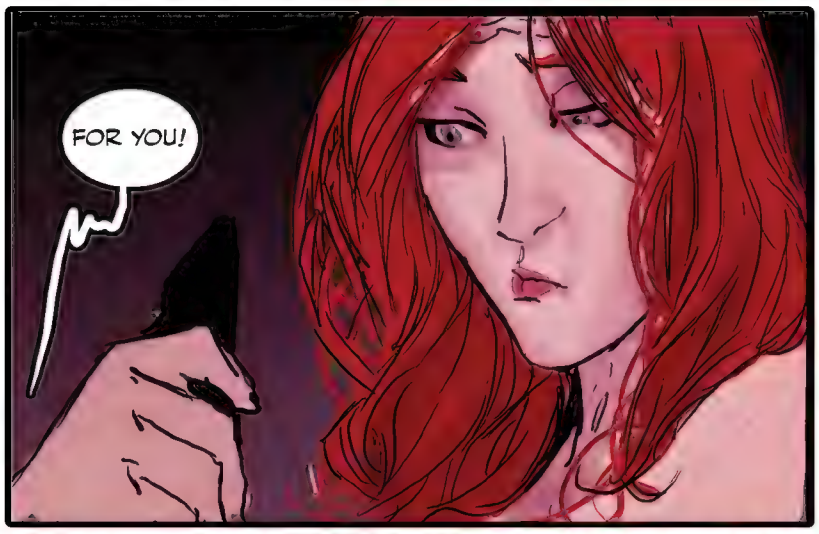
I KNOW! YOU CALL TOM! FROM MY PHONE!
TOM?
YEAH! AND YOU TELL HIM TO PUT HER ON!

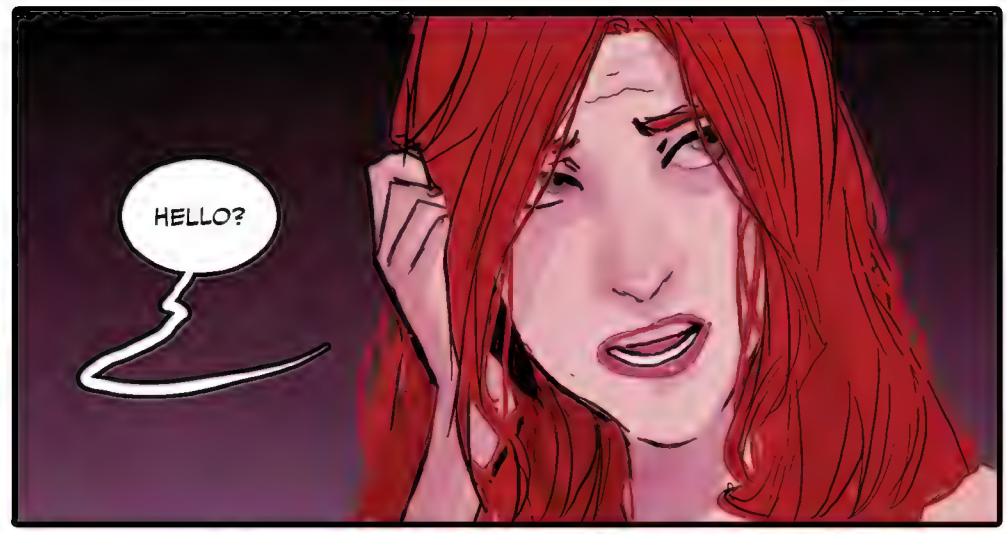

THAT'S ME, THIS COULD ACTUALLY BE IT!
OKAY, YOU MUST BE CURIOUS AS TO WHY THE HELL WOULD ANYONE ANSWER CALLS DURING SEX. WELL, AS IT TURNS OUT, TOM'S BROTHER WAS IN A HOSPITAL, WAITING FOR HIS WIFE TO GIVE BIRTH, AND THEY WERE WAITING FOR NEWS... IT GOT THEM TALKING...AND, OH WELL...
I'LL GET IT!


NAH, S'OKAY!
HEEY! MY KNOT!
HONEY, YOU HAVE THE KNOT-TYING SKILLS OF A MOVIE VILLAIN!

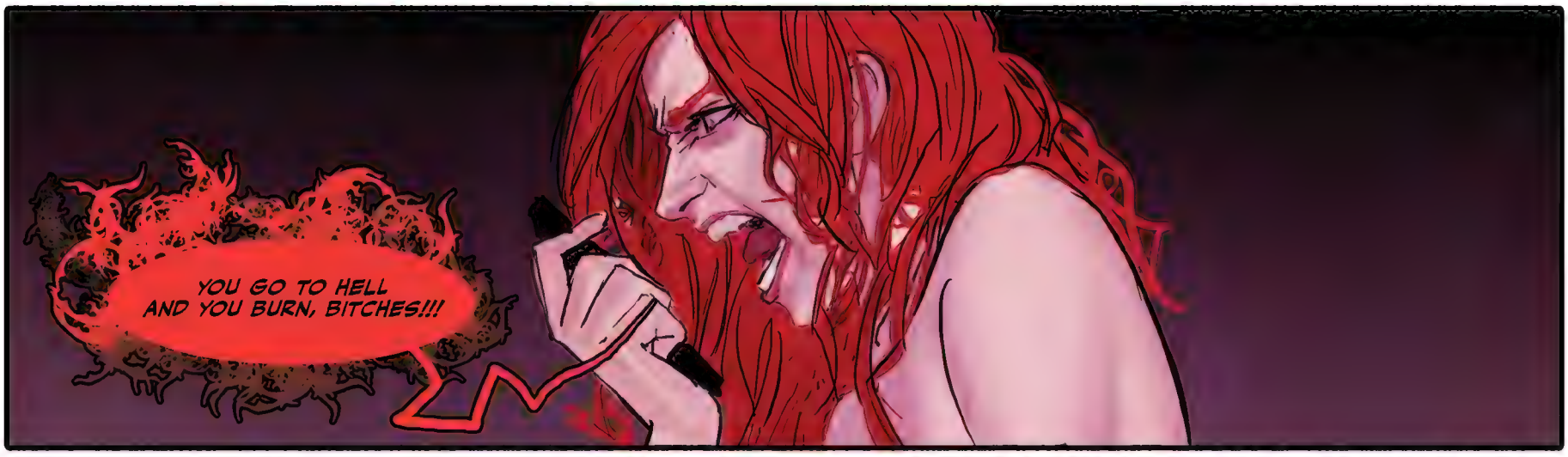

AN UNKNOWN NUMBER?


HELLO!?
OH...
YEAH...
UHUH, SHE'S HERE!


FOR YOU!

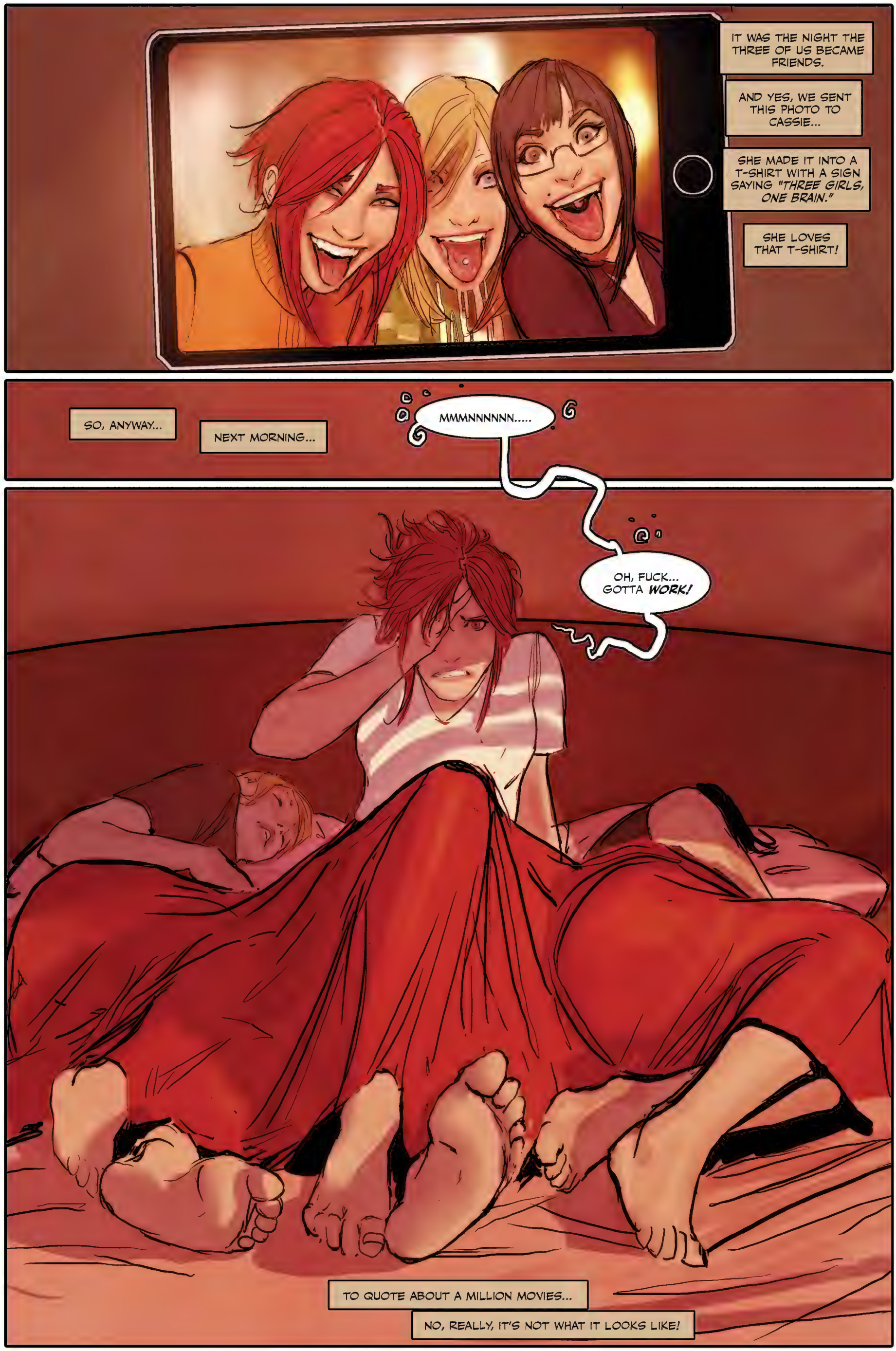

HELLO?

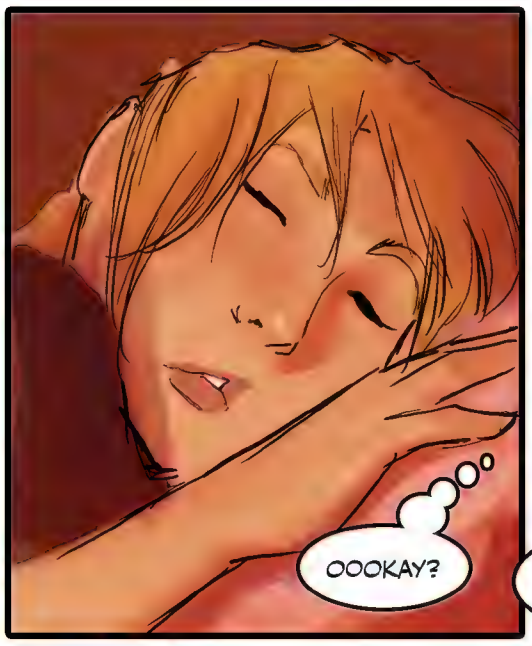
WAZZA
AAAAP

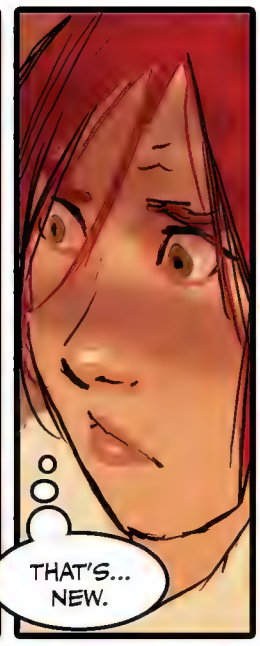

YOU GO TO HELL AND YOU BURN, BITCHES!!!

FUCKING CLAMJAMMERS!
YOU ARE REALLY HOT WHEN YOU ARE PISSED.
OH, JUST SHUT UP AND...

FUCK ME, THAT WAS GOOD!!!
YEAH...IT WAS A GOOD NIGHT...MY BITCHY THOUGHTS NOT-WITHSTANDING.


IT WAS THE NIGHT THE THREE OF US BECAME FRIENDS.
AND YES, WE SENT THIS PHOTO TO CASSIE...
SHE MADE IT INTO A T-SHIRT WITH A SIGN SAYING "THREE GIRLS, ONE BRAIN."
SHE LOVES THAT T-SHIRT!
SO, ANYWAY...
NEXT MORNING...
MMMNNNNNN.....
OH, FUCK... GOTTA WORK!
TO QUOTE ABOUT A MILLION MOVIES...
NO, REALLY, IT'S NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!

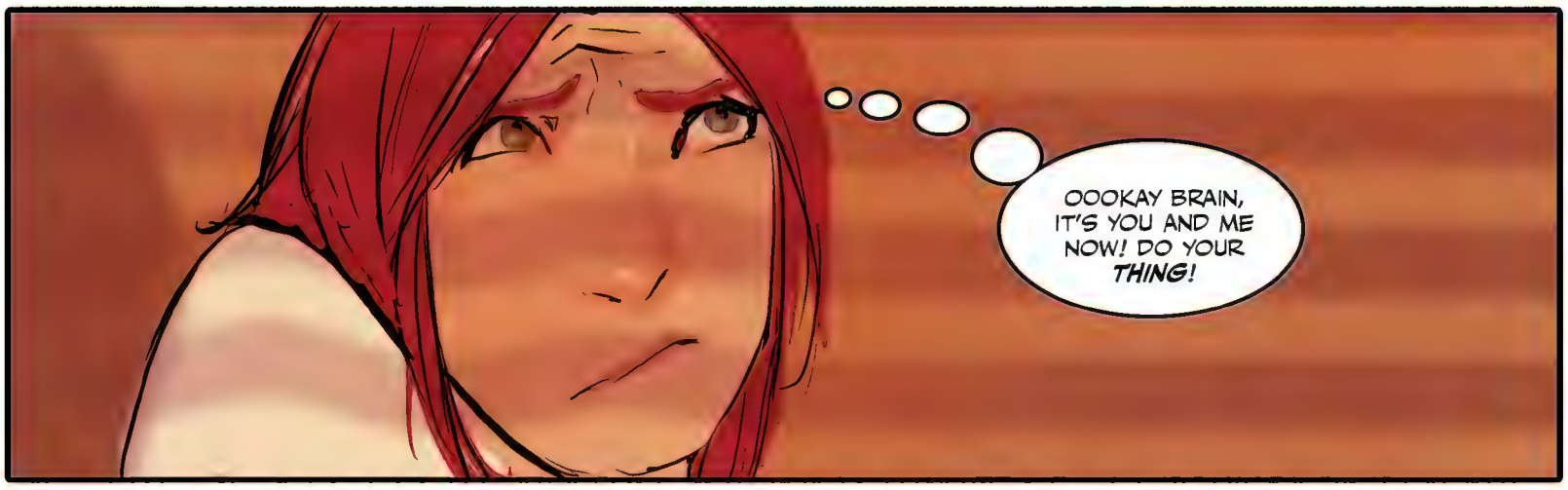

OOOKAY?


THAT'S... NEW.

WELL...

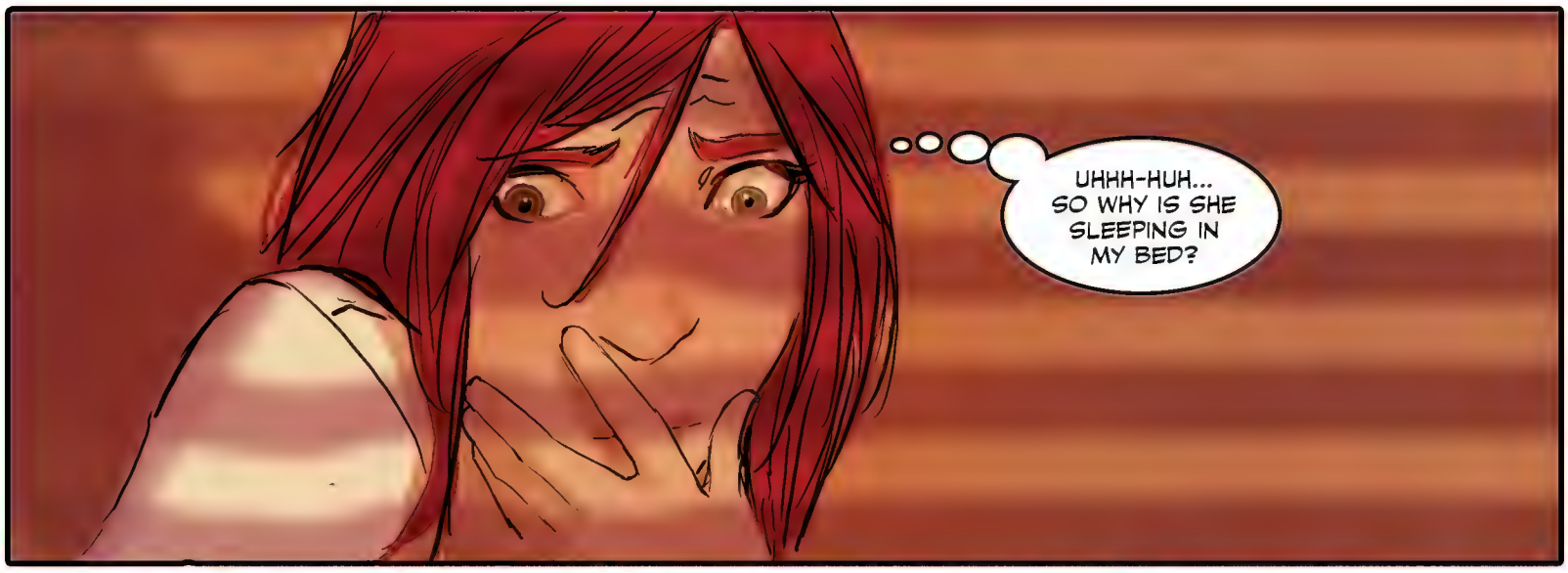
AT LEAST MY DROOLY PRINCESS IS HERE, AS WELL.

SOOOOOOOOOOOOOO...
THE *HELL* HAPPENED LAST NIGHT?


OOOKAY BRAIN, IT'S YOU AND ME NOW! DO YOUR *THING*!

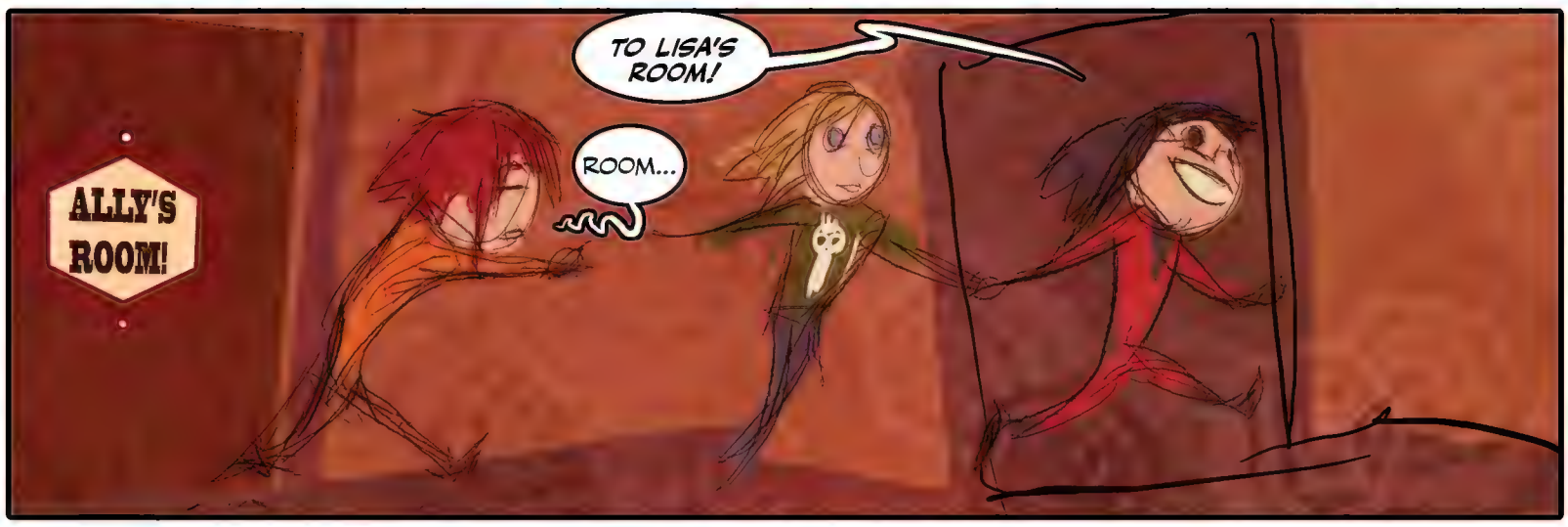
SEE YOU GUYS! I'LL GO HOME IN MY CAR THAT I HAVE OR SOMETHING!
NO! FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE DRUNK AND BLAH!

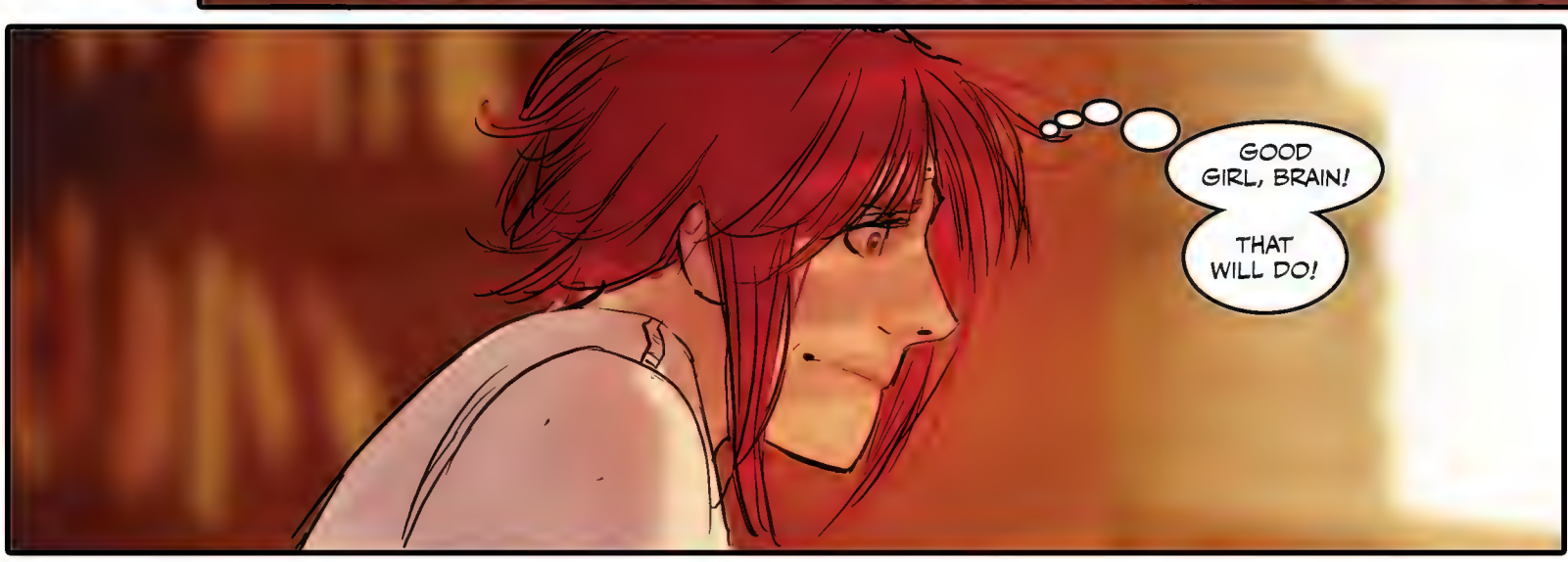
OUR PLACE IS CLOSE AND I HAVE A SPARE ROOM!
YAY...AND STUFF!
ZZZ

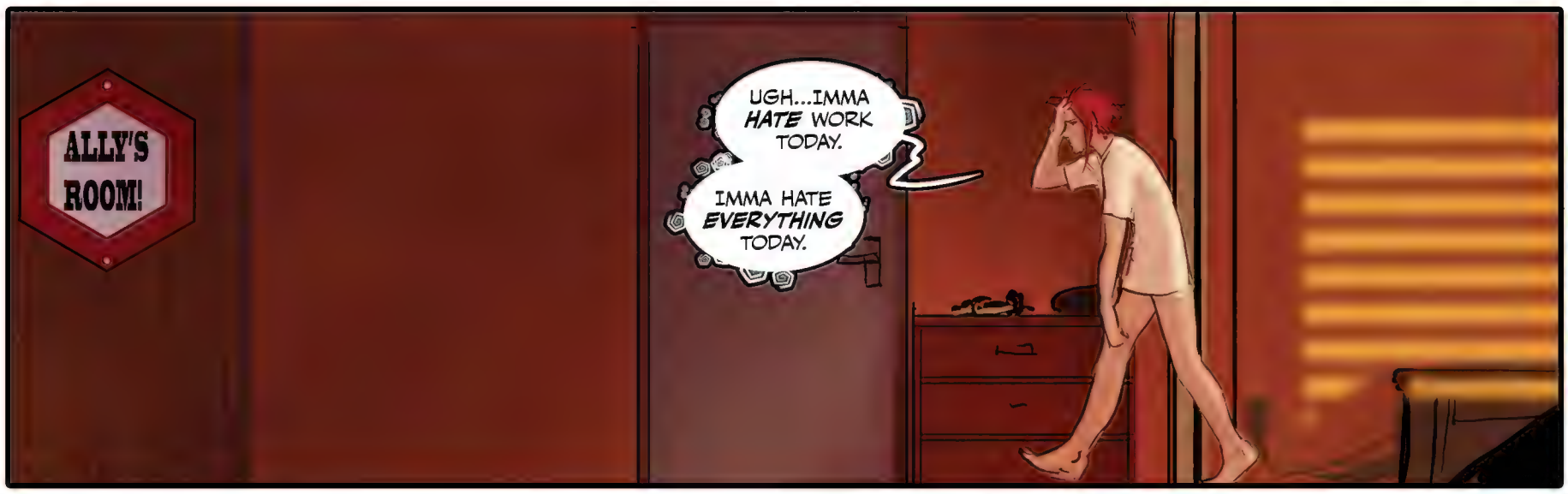

UHHH-HUH... SO WHY IS SHE SLEEPING IN MY BED?

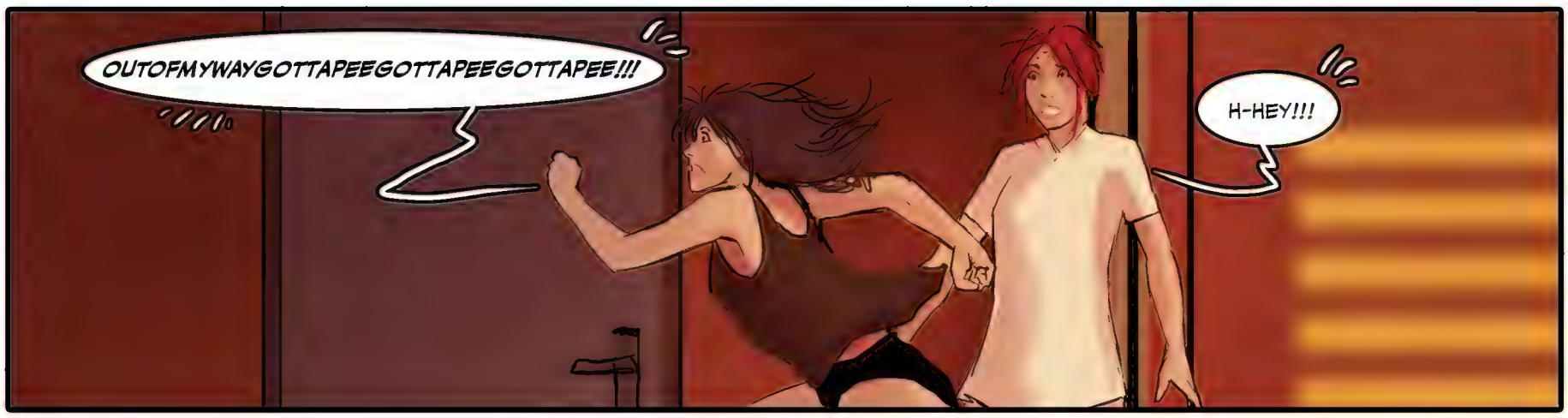
BLAHBLAH, MY ROOM OR SOMETHING!
ALLY'S ROOM!

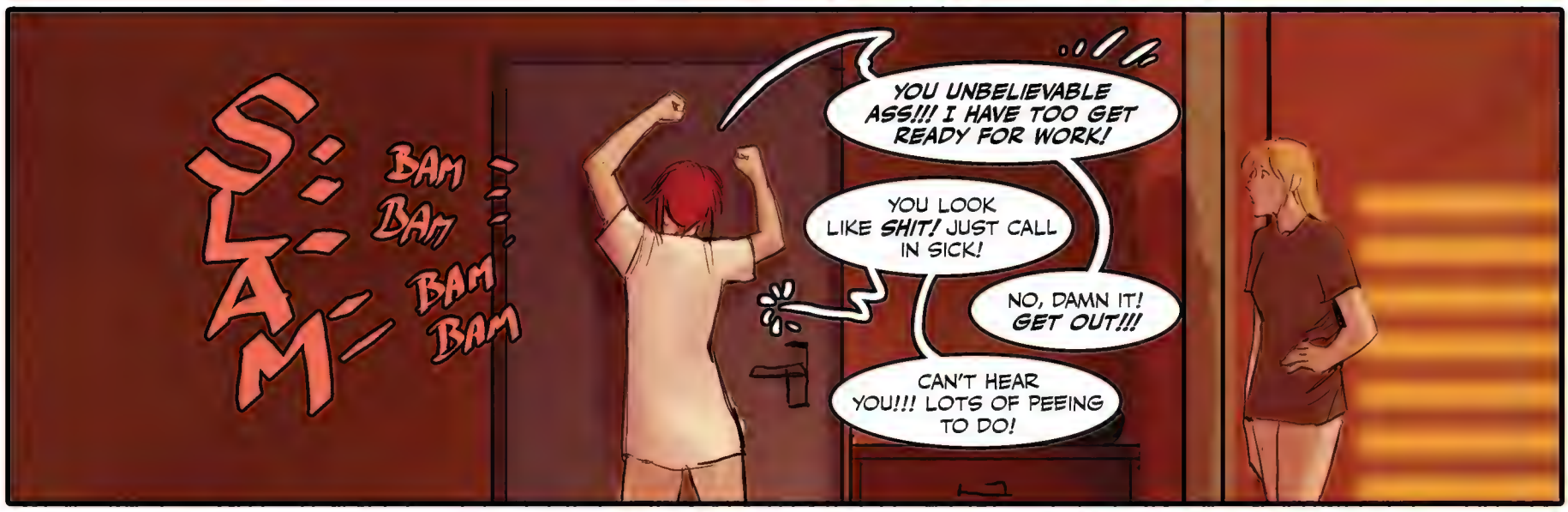
OH NO, MY CLOTHES ARE EVERYWHERE BECAUSE I WAS TRYING STUFF ON LAST NIGHT, OR SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES!

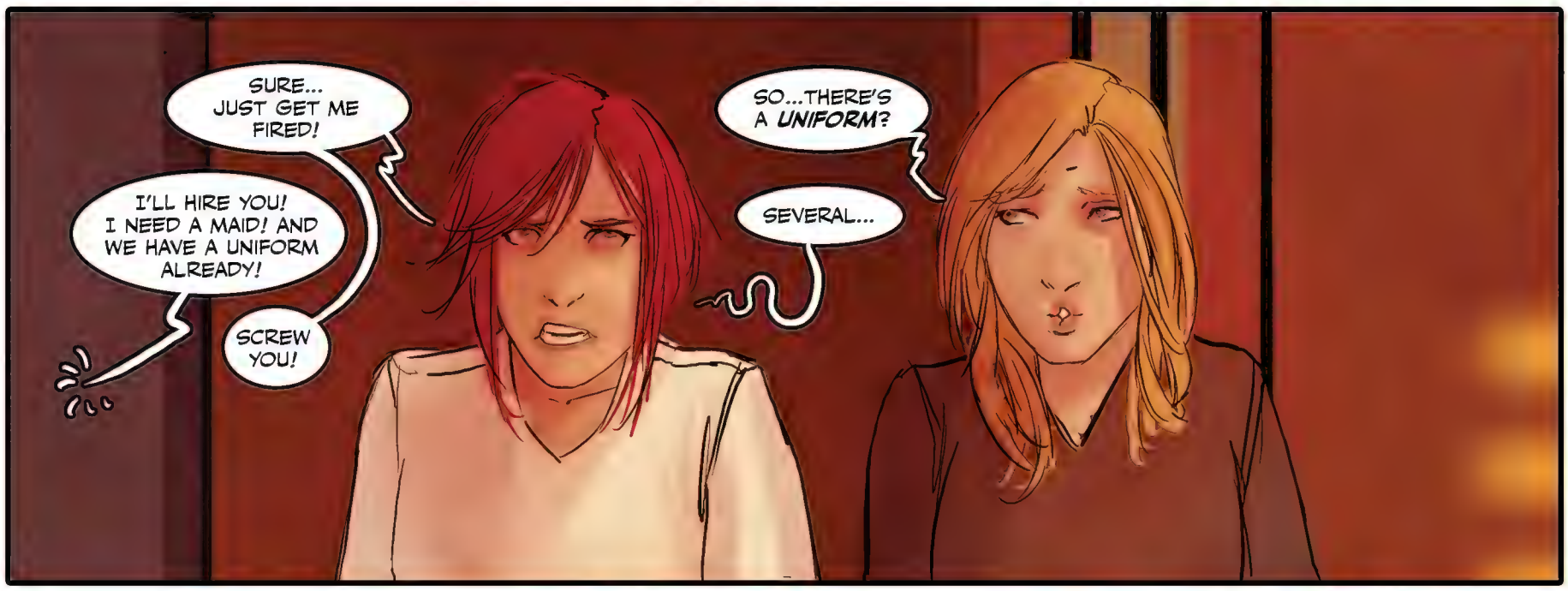

TO LISA'S ROOM!
ROOM...
ALLY'S ROOM!

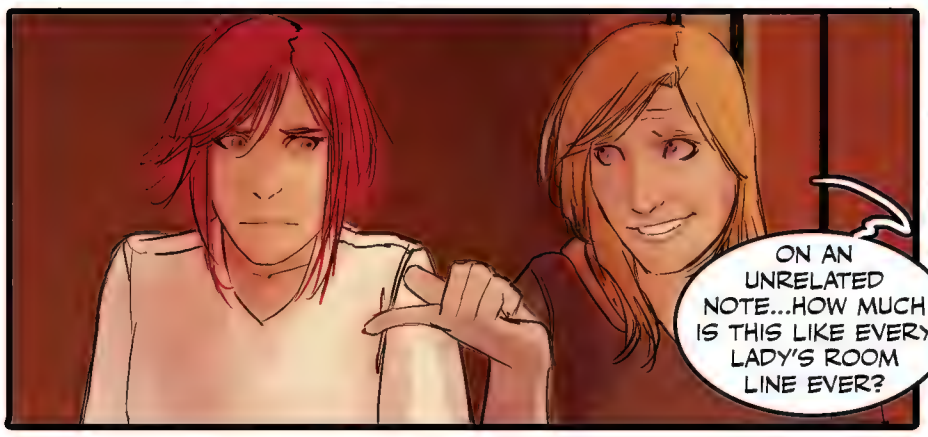

GOOD GIRL, BRAIN!
THAT WILL DO!

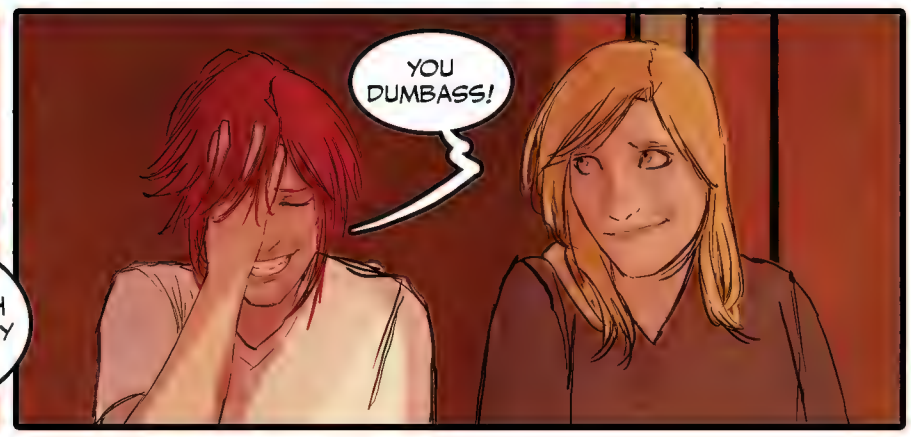

ALLY'S ROOM!
UGH...IMMA HATE WORK TODAY.
IMMA HATE EVERYTHING TODAY.

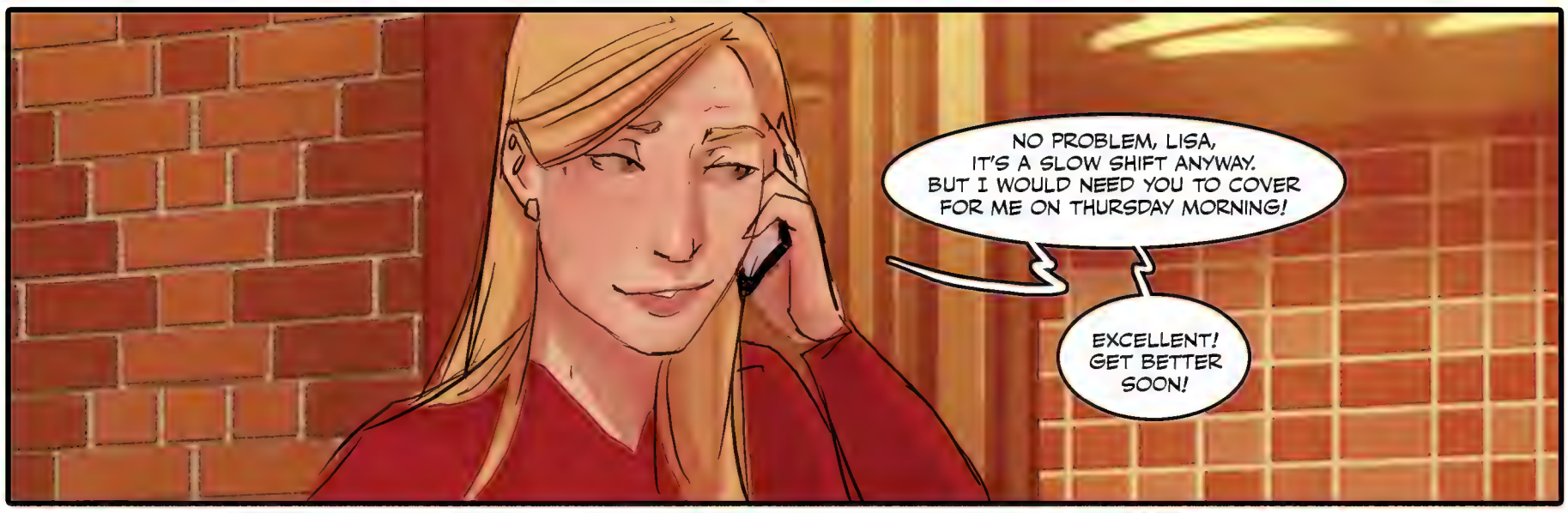

OUTOFMYWAYGOTTAPEEGOTTAPEEGOTTAPEE!!!
H-HEY!!!


SLAM
BAM BAM BAM BAM
YOU UNBELIEVABLE ASS!!! I HAVE TOO GET READY FOR WORK!
YOU LOOK LIKE SHIT! JUST CALL IN SICK!
NO, DAMN IT! GET OUT!!!
CAN'T HEAR YOU!!! LOTS OF PEEING TO DO!


SURE... JUST GET ME FIRED!
I'LL HIRE YOU! I NEED A MAID! AND WE HAVE A UNIFORM ALREADY!
SCREW YOU!
SO...THERE'S A UNIFORM?
SEVERAL...

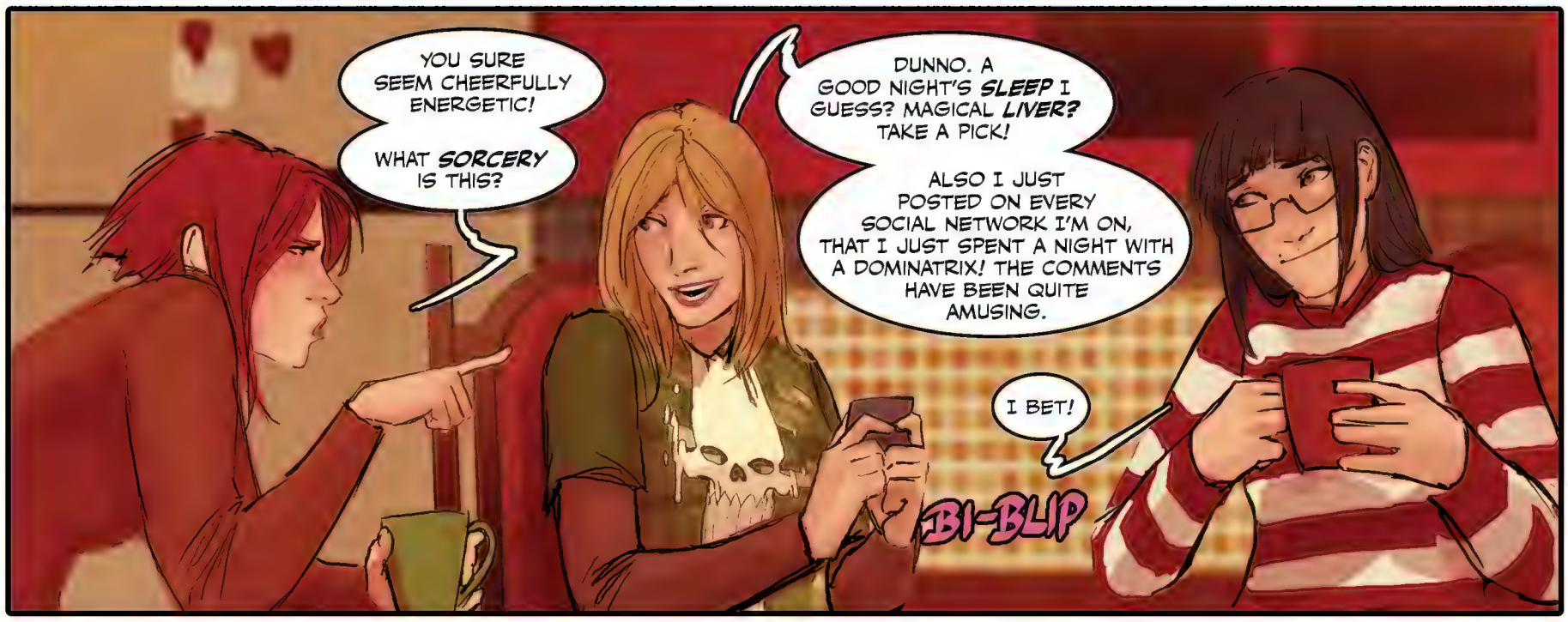

ON AN UNRELATED NOTE...HOW MUCH IS THIS LIKE EVERY LADY'S ROOM LINE EVER?

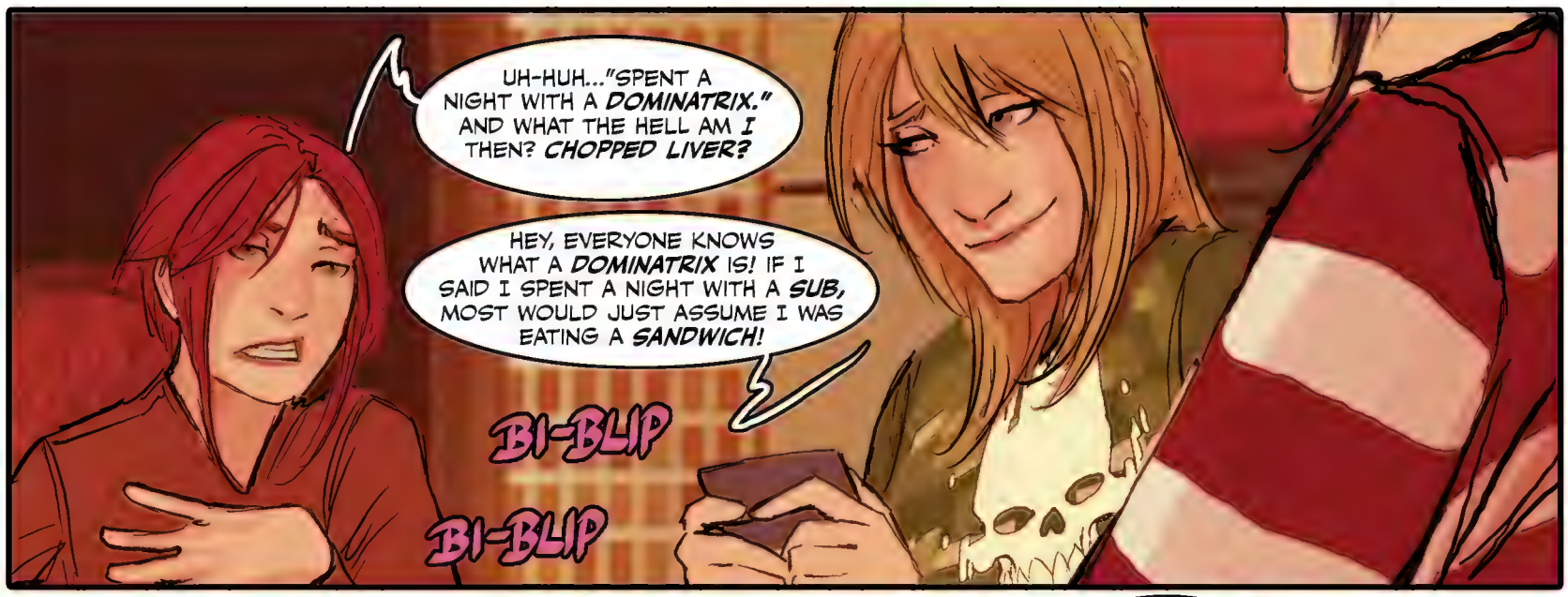

YOU DUMBASS!


NO PROBLEM, LISA, IT'S A SLOW SHIFT ANYWAY. BUT I WOULD NEED YOU TO COVER FOR ME ON THURSDAY MORNING!
EXCELLENT! GET BETTER SOON!

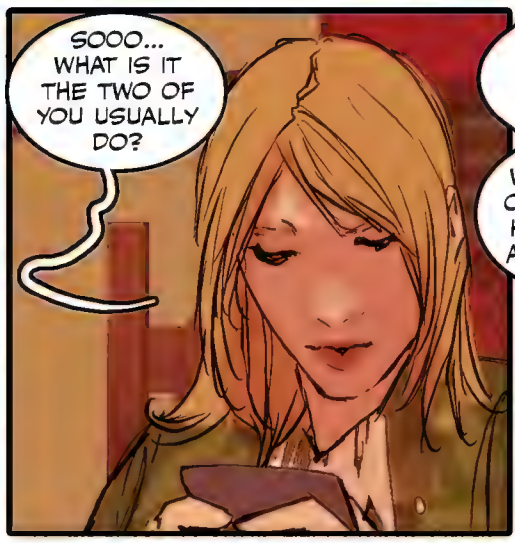
BI-BLIP
MYEAH...
I USED TO DISLIKE HER...
BECAUSE...BLONDE?
YEAH. I'M A DICK!

UGH...COME ON COFFEE! DO YOUR THING!
AWW...LOOK WHO'S HAD A WILD NIGHT!
BI-BLIP

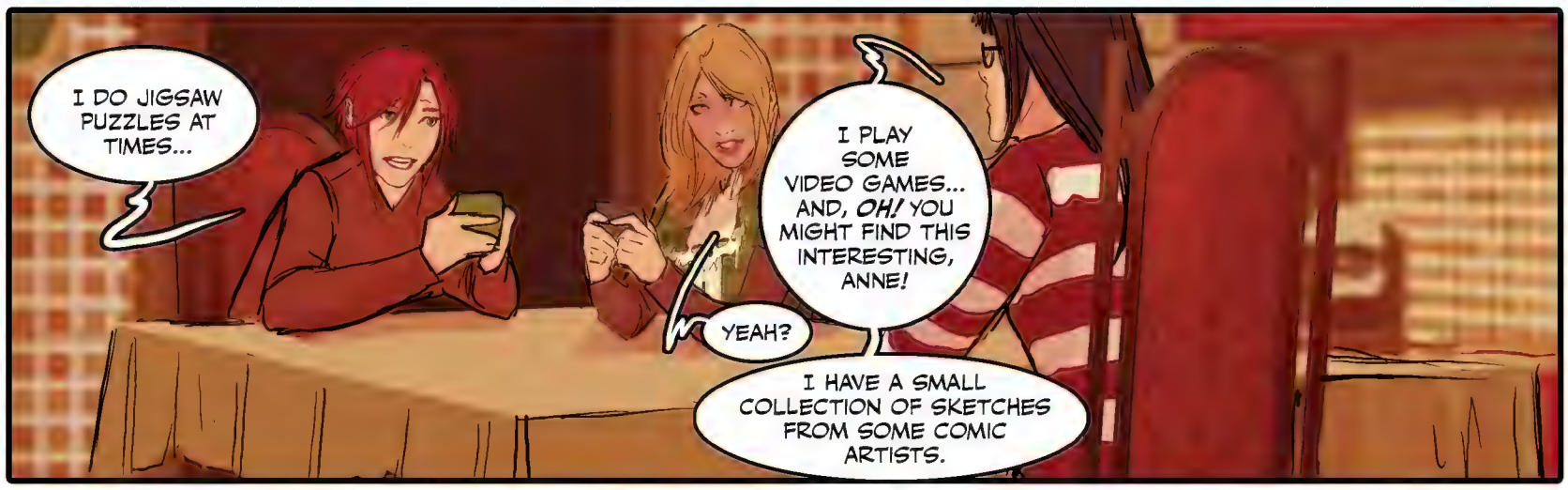

YOU SURE SEEM CHEERFULLY ENERGETIC!
WHAT SORCERY IS THIS?
DUNNO. A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP I GUESS? MAGICAL LIVER? TAKE A PICK!
ALSO I JUST POSTED ON EVERY SOCIAL NETWORK I'M ON, THAT I JUST SPENT A NIGHT WITH A DOMINATRIX! THE COMMENTS HAVE BEEN QUITE AMUSING.
I BET!
BI-BLIP


UH-HUH..."SPENT A NIGHT WITH A DOMINATRIX." AND WHAT THE HELL AM I THEN? CHOPPED LIVER?
HEY, EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT A DOMINATRIX IS! IF I SAID I SPENT A NIGHT WITH A SUB, MOST WOULD JUST ASSUME I WAS EATING A SANDWICH!
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP

FAIR POINT.


SOOO... WHAT IS IT THE TWO OF YOU USUALLY DO?

TALK... WATCH MOVIES READ...JUST... USUAL STUFF.
WE HAVE OUR OWN HOBBIES AS WELL.

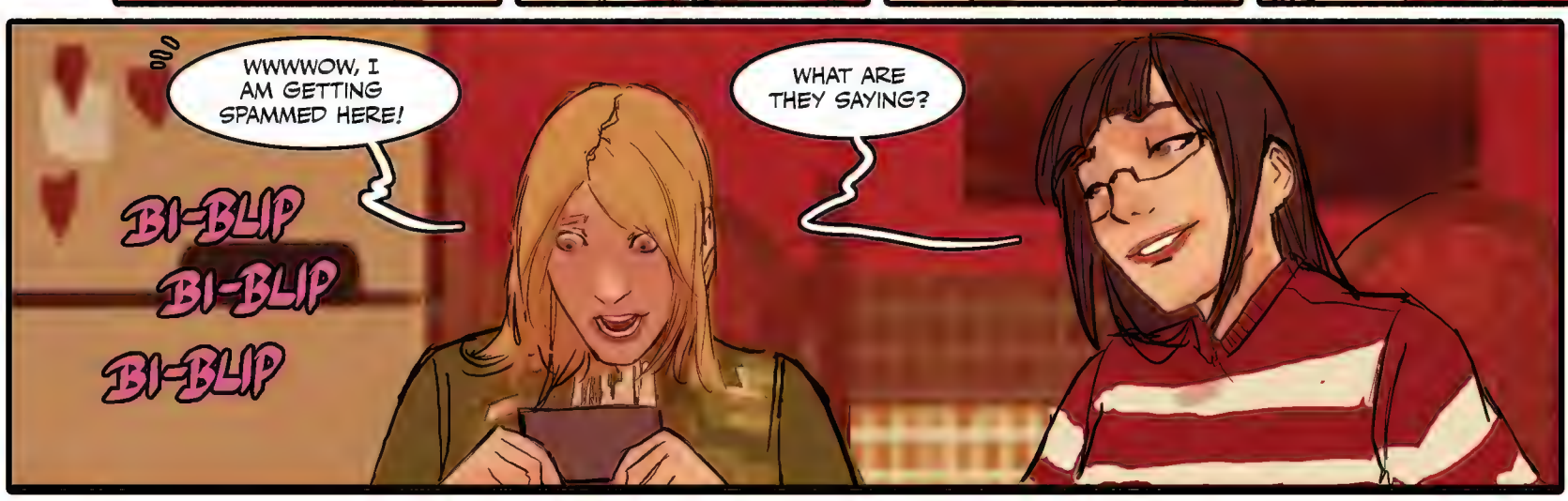

I DO JIGSAW PUZZLES AT TIMES...
I PLAY SOME VIDEO GAMES... AND, OH! YOU MIGHT FIND THIS INTERESTING, ANNE!
YEAH?
I HAVE A SMALL COLLECTION OF SKETCHES FROM SOME COMIC ARTISTS.

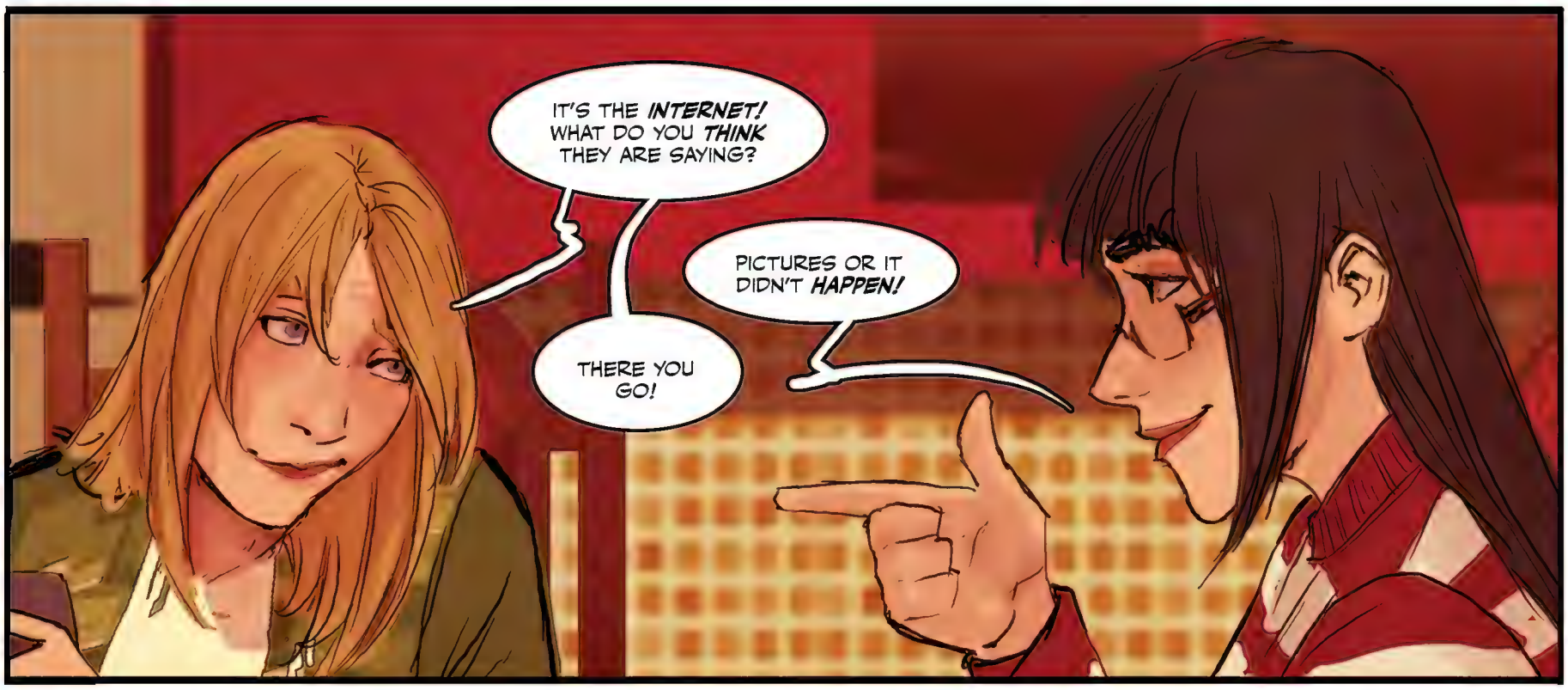
YOU DO?

IT'S...NOT MUCH. JUST SEVERAL PIECES.

I NEVER KNEW THAT.

I DUNNO... DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD FIND IT INTERESTING.


WWWWOW, I AM GETTING SPAMMED HERE!
WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP


IT'S THE INTERNET! WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY ARE SAYING?
PICTURES OR IT DIDN'T HAPPEN!
THERE YOU GO!

HEH!
BI-BLIP

SOOO...THIS BONDAGE STUFF...
WHAT'S THAT? WHY YES, THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM, DID IT JUST FART!?

I WOULD HAVE FOUND ANNE'S OBSESSIVE CURIOSITY ON THE TOPIC OF BDSM FUNNY...

BUT THEN AGAIN, I WAS IN THAT SAME INEXPERIENCED POSITION JUST A FEW WEEKS EARLIER...

THAT REALIZATION KEPT ME FROM CHUCKLING AT ANNE'S CURIOSITY.

WE TALKED FOR ***HOURS***...ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCES, THE SUCCESSFUL SESSIONS AND MISERABLE FAILS...

YES, THERE WERE FAILS. I MAY BE SKIPPING OVER THEM AT TIMES, BUT A SUDDEN NEED TO VISIT THE TOILET MID-SESSION WOULD HIT ME MORE OFTEN THAN I WOULD LIKE TO ADMIT...

BI-BLIP

AND WHILE I WAS BUSY BRAGGING LIKE A TEENAGER, ANNE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY NERVOUS.

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, IT WAS HITTING HER...

SHE REALLY ***WAS*** IN A HOUSE WITH A ***DOMINATRIX!***

BUT THANKFULLY, ALLY WAS ***OBSERVANT.***

I GUESS READING BODY LANGUAGE COMES WITH THE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR A DOMME.

HER METHOD OF DEFUSING THE SITUATION WASN'T THE ONE I MIGHT HAVE CHOSEN...

BUUUUUT...

YOU WANNA SEE THE ***ROOM?***

BI-BLIP

ANNNND FREAKOUT IN 3...2...1...

ANNE, YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY ***NOTHING*** TO FEAR, OKAY?

I PROMISE!

MAYBE IT WAS HER LOOK, OR HER DORKY SWEATER... HER SMILE, OR HER TONE OF VOICE...WHATEVER IT WAS, IT WORKED.

FREAKOUT WAS DIFFUSED!

AH, YES...THERE WAS SO MUCH POTENTIAL IN THAT ROOM...

WELL, HERE IT IS!

ANNE SAW THIS POTENTIAL... AND IT SCARED HER...

THERE WAS A SCENE IN MY STORY OF LISBETH, ALLISON, AND SARAH. SARAH'S FIRST SESSION WITH THE OTHERS.

I WROTE THIS SPECIFIC BIT OF STORY FROM SARAH'S PERSPECTIVE.

I GUESS THAT WAS WHY ANNE RELATED SO STRONGLY TO IT. IN FACT, SHE OWED SEVERAL ORGASMS TO THAT SCENE ALONE.

THAT SATURDAY, AS SHE ENTERED OUR PLAYROOM, SHE SAW THE POTENTIAL, AND THOUGHT: ***WHAT IF?***

SHE FEARED THE "WHAT IF."

SHE FEARED THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS SCENARIO ACTUALLY HAPPENING. FEARED HER OWN DESIRE FOR THIS TO OCCUR, AND ABOVE ALL, SHE FEARED HER REACTION TO A POSSIBLE OFFER...

IN SHORT, SHE WAS EXPERIENCING A COMPLETE AND UTTER SYSTEM FAILURE.

THANKFULLY, DOMINATRIX WALDO HERE HAD HER SPECIFIC AIR OF COMPLETE ALOOFNESS, WHICH REBOOTED ANNE'S BRAIN WITH EASE.

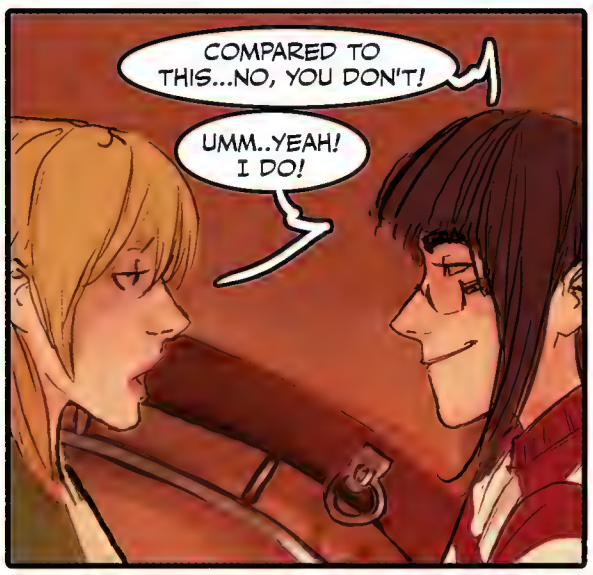
SO...EHM...YEAH... AS YOU CAN SEE, WE HAD A SPARE BED HERE AS WELL...BUUUUT I KINDA SORTA FIGURED YOU MIGHT GET FREAKED OUT IF I WENT... ***"HEY, YOU'LL SLEEP IN MY SEX-ROOM!"***

YEAH... ON A SIDENOTE, THIS MAY BE THE COOLEST BED I'VE EVER SEEN.
WHY, THANK YOU!

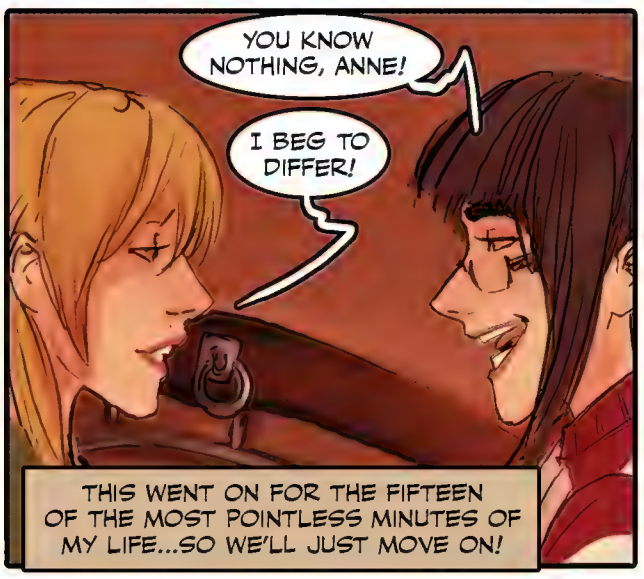
AND THIS IS WHERE SHE HAD YOU BOUND, THINKING YOU WERE ALONE?
YUP!
DOESN'T SEEM ALL *THAT* IMPRESSIVE.
IT'S MISSING THE SYBIAN NOW.

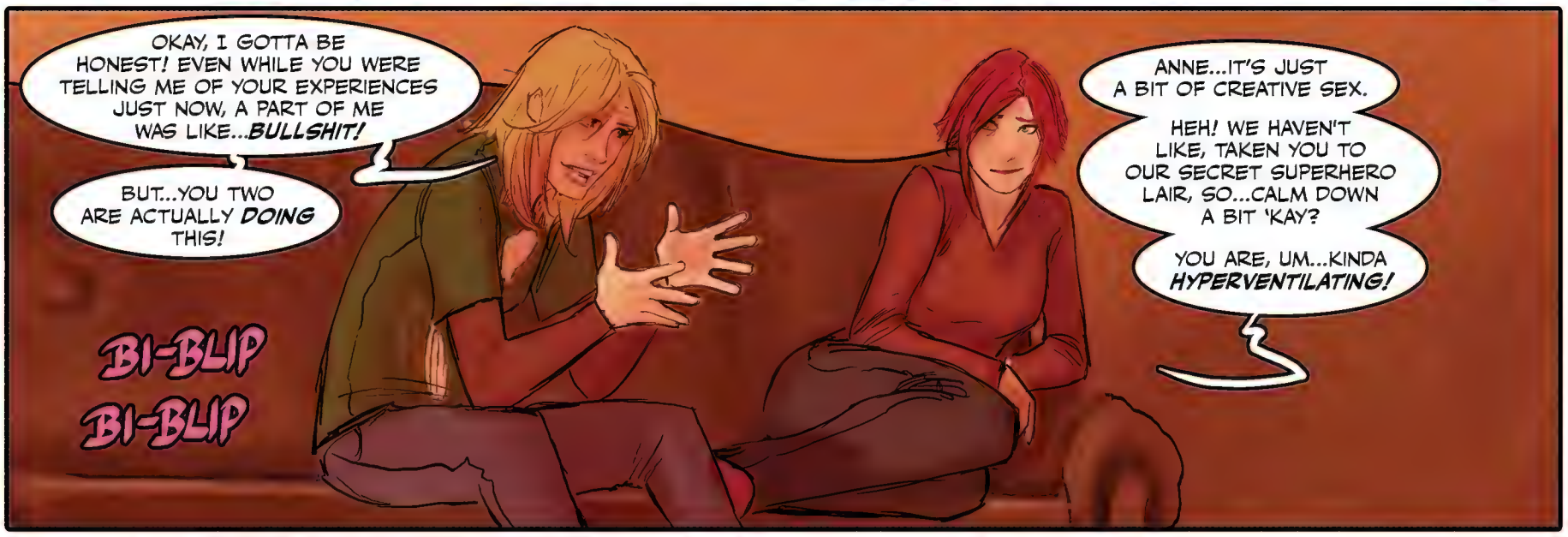
HOLY CRAP, YOU WEREN'T KIDDING ABOUT THE UNIFORMS, WERE YOU? JEEZ, HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND ON ALL THIS???
WE DO NOT SPEAK OF THAT!

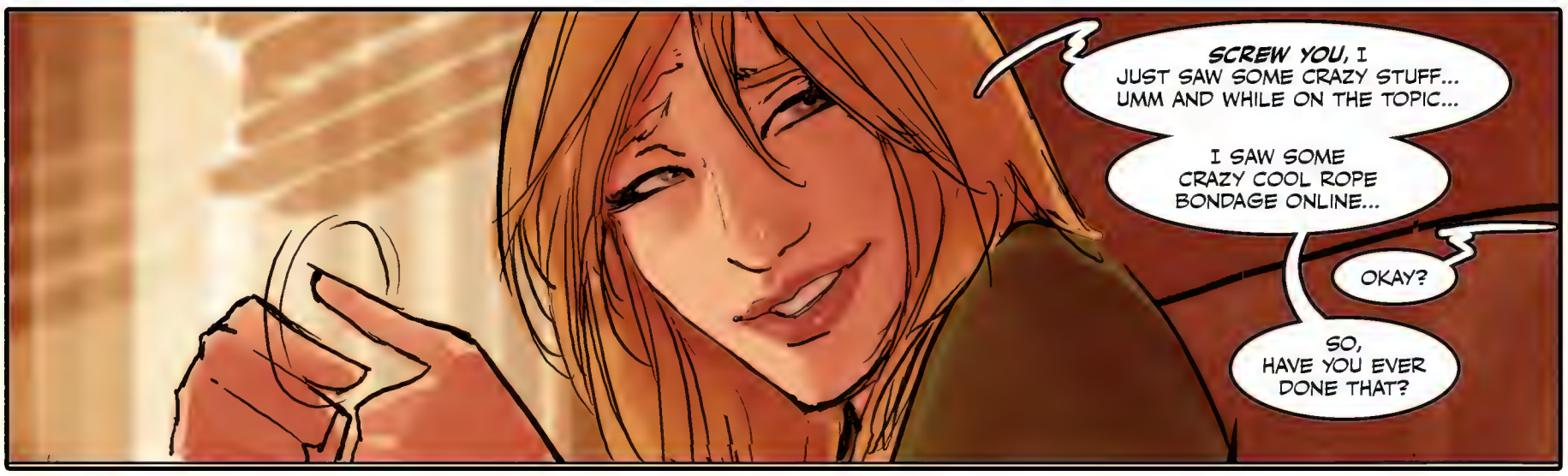
TRUST ME, IT IS NOT EVEN COMPARABLE. IF THIS FELLA HADN'T SEEN SO MUCH ACTION, I WOULD EVEN LET YOU TRY IT!
ALLY, I HAVE A VIBRATOR. OF MY OWN!


COMPARED TO THIS...NO, YOU DON'T!
UMM..YEAH! I DO!

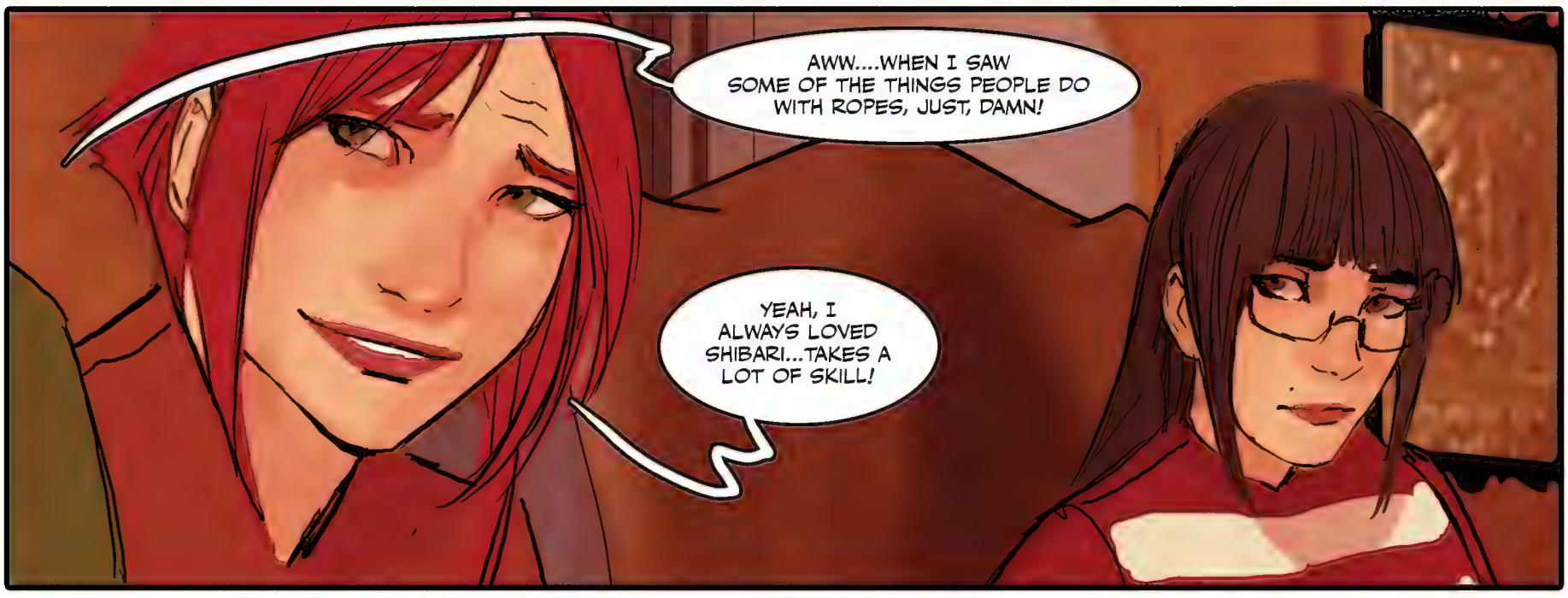
NUH-UH!
OH, YES! PREEETY SURE I DO!

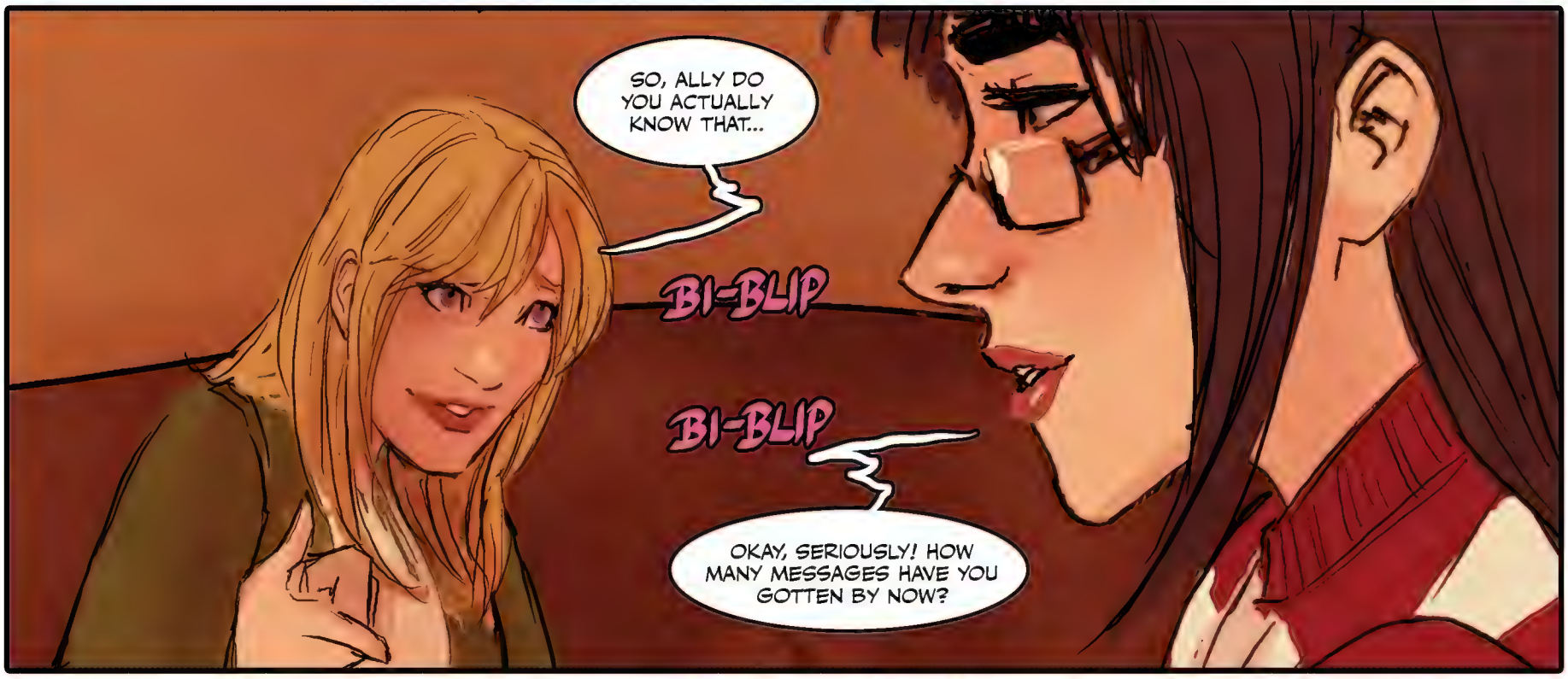

YOU KNOW NOTHING, ANNE!
I BEG TO DIFFER!
THIS WENT ON FOR THE FIFTEEN OF THE MOST POINTLESS MINUTES OF MY LIFE...SO WE'LL JUST MOVE ON!

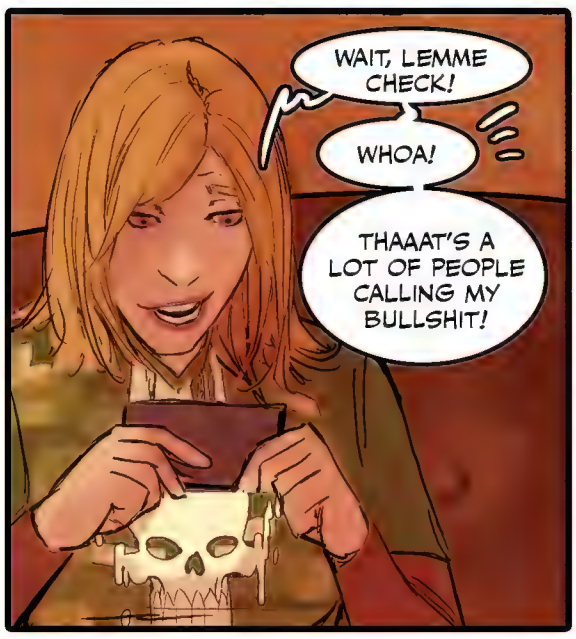

OKAY, I GOTTA BE HONEST! EVEN WHILE YOU WERE TELLING ME OF YOUR EXPERIENCES JUST NOW, A PART OF ME WAS LIKE...*BULLSHIT!*
BUT...YOU TWO ARE ACTUALLY *DOING* THIS!
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP
ANNE...IT'S JUST A BIT OF CREATIVE SEX.
HEH! WE HAVEN'T LIKE, TAKEN YOU TO OUR SECRET SUPERHERO LAIR, SO...CALM DOWN A BIT 'KAY?
YOU ARE, UM...KINDA *HYPERVENTILATING!*

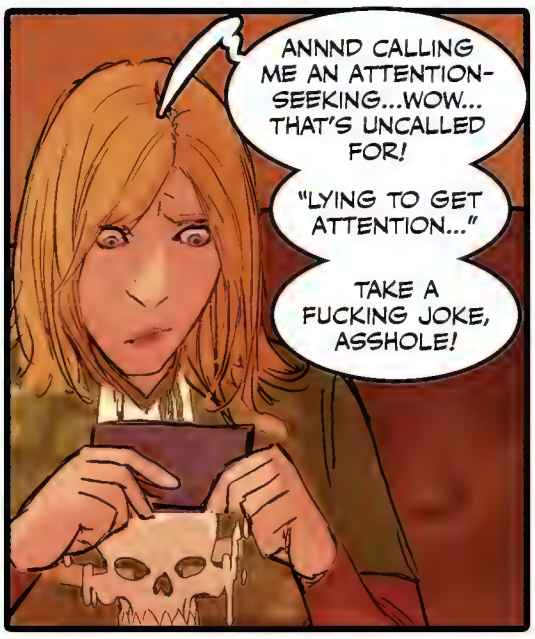

SCREW YOU, I JUST SAW SOME CRAZY STUFF... UMM AND WHILE ON THE TOPIC...
I SAW SOME CRAZY COOL ROPE BONDAGE ONLINE...
OKAY?
SO, HAVE YOU EVER DONE THAT?

UM...WELL...
NOT REALLY. I MEAN, WE USE ROPES AT TIMES, BUT NOT TO THAT EXTENT, WE MOSTLY STICK TO OTHER KINDS OF RESTRAINTS.

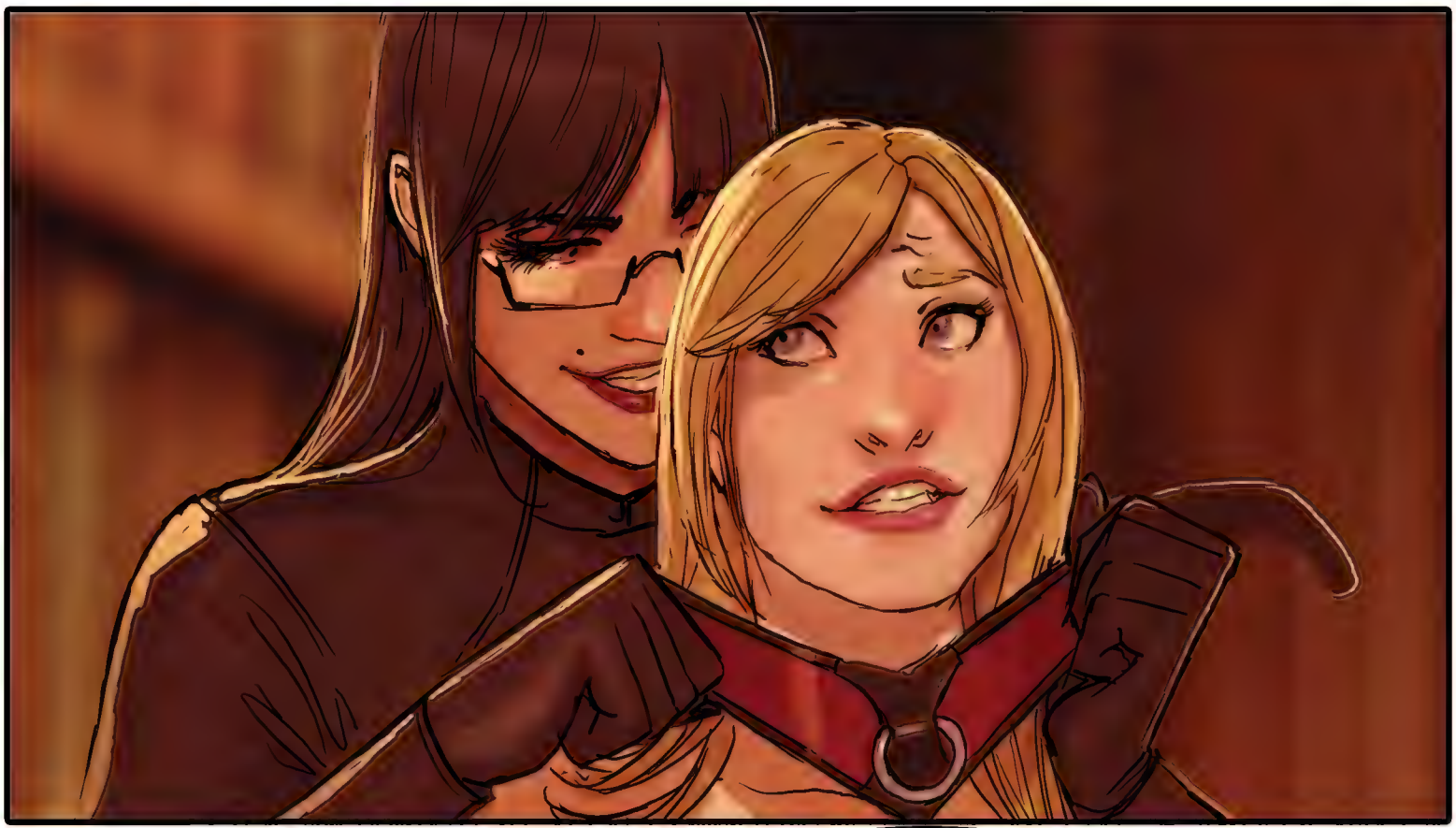

AWW....WHEN I SAW SOME OF THE THINGS PEOPLE DO WITH ROPES, JUST, DAMN!
YEAH, I ALWAYS LOVED SHIBARI...TAKES A LOT OF SKILL!

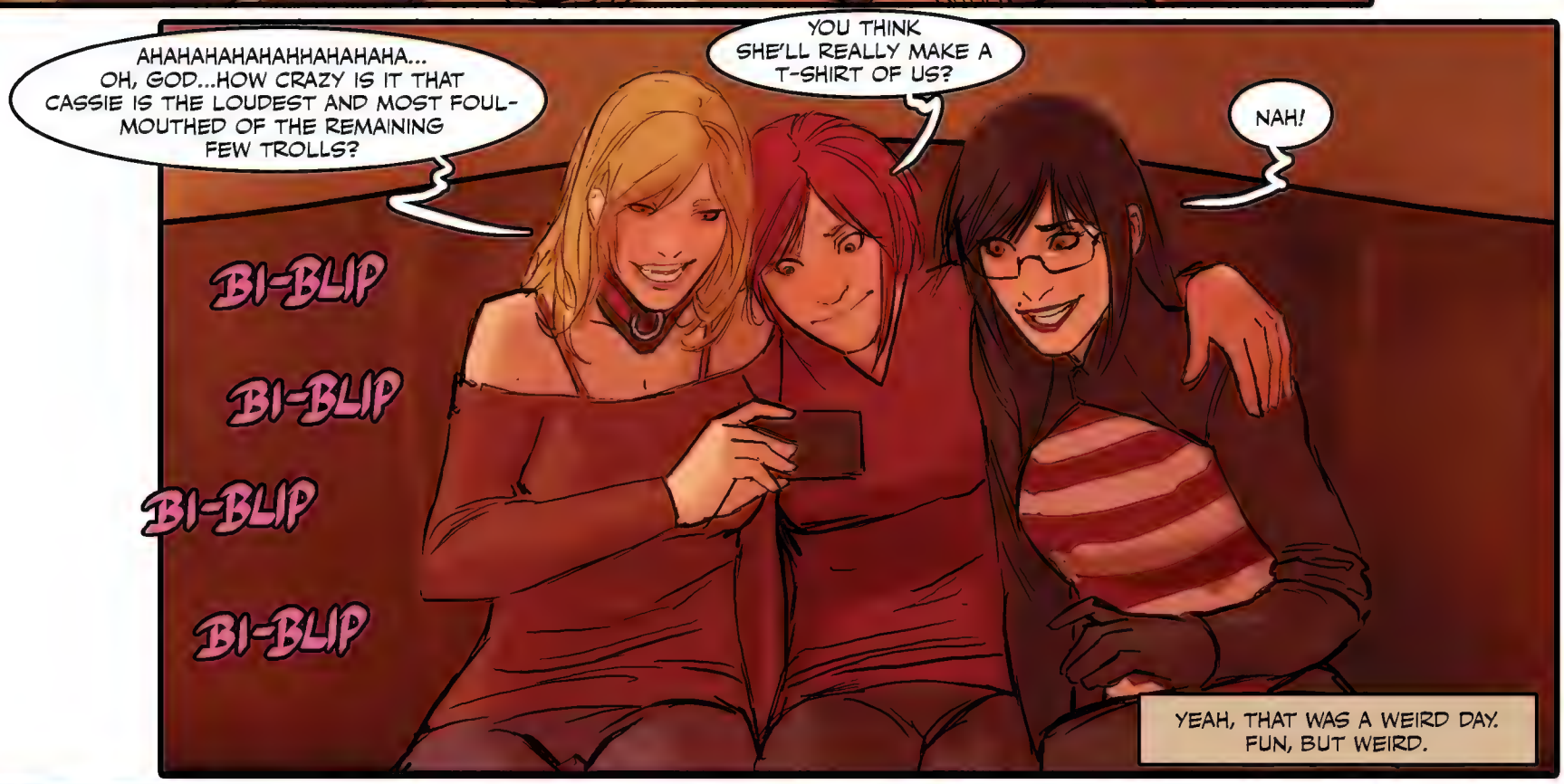

SO, ALLY DO YOU ACTUALLY KNOW THAT...
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP
OKAY, SERIOUSLY! HOW MANY MESSAGES HAVE YOU GOTTEN BY NOW?


WAIT, LEMME CHECK!
WHOA!
THAAAT'S A LOT OF PEOPLE CALLING MY BULLSHIT!

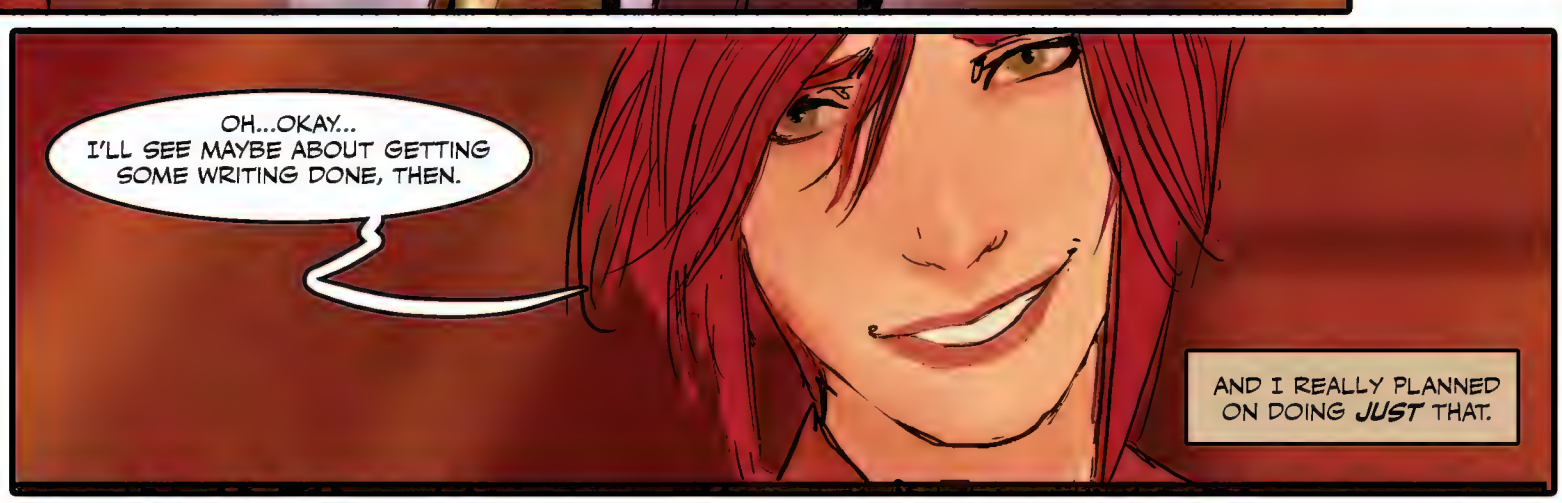

ANNND CALLING ME AN ATTENTION-SEEKING...WOW... THAT'S UNCALLED FOR!
"LYING TO GET ATTENTION..."
TAKE A FUCKING JOKE, ASSHOLE!

SO, THEY WANT PROOF?



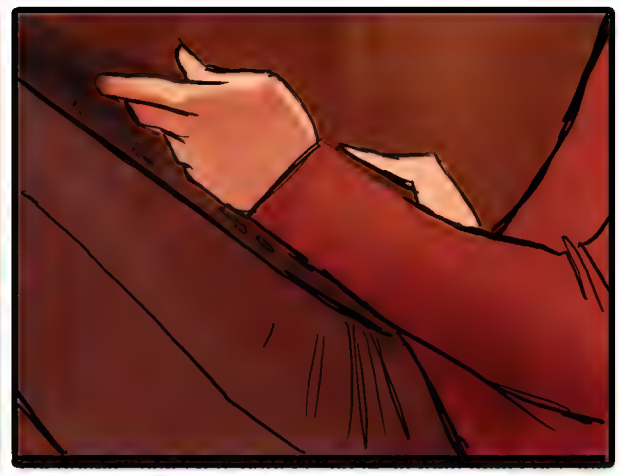

AHAHAHAHAHAHHAHAHAHA... OH, GOD...HOW CRAZY IS IT THAT CASSIE IS THE LOUDEST AND MOST FOUL-MOUTHED OF THE REMAINING FEW TROLLS?
YOU THINK SHE'LL REALLY MAKE A T-SHIRT OF US?
NAH!
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP
BI-BLIP
YEAH, THAT WAS A WEIRD DAY. FUN, BUT WEIRD.

I'LL CALL YOU BOTH TOMORROW, MAYBE IF YOU WANT WE CAN GRAB LUNCH OR SOMETHING?
SURE!
I'LL BE BACK IN AN HOUR OR SO. GONNA KEEP HER COMPANY 'TIL SHE GETS TO HER CAR, AND I'VE GOT SOMETHING I NEED TO PICK UP.


OH...OKAY... I'LL SEE MAYBE ABOUT GETTING SOME WRITING DONE, THEN.
AND I REALLY PLANNED ON DOING *JUST* THAT.

BUT, YOU KNOW...I DECIDED TO SURF A BIT, FIRST.
STRAIGHT TO ANNE'S PHOTO...

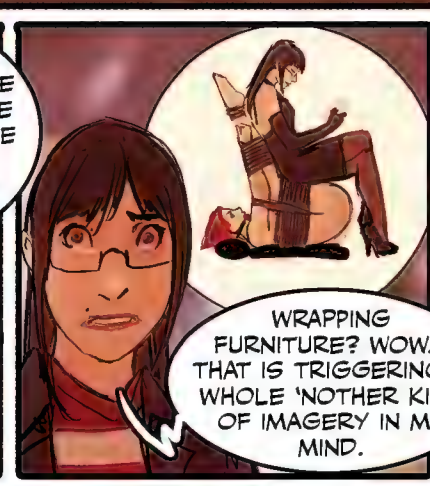
MAYBE GET A FEW CHUCKLES OUT OF IT...

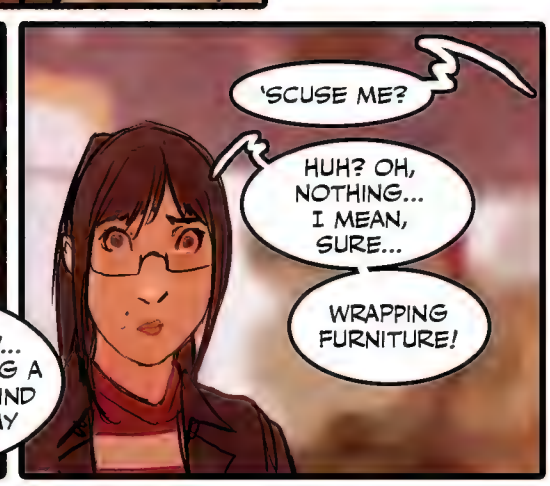


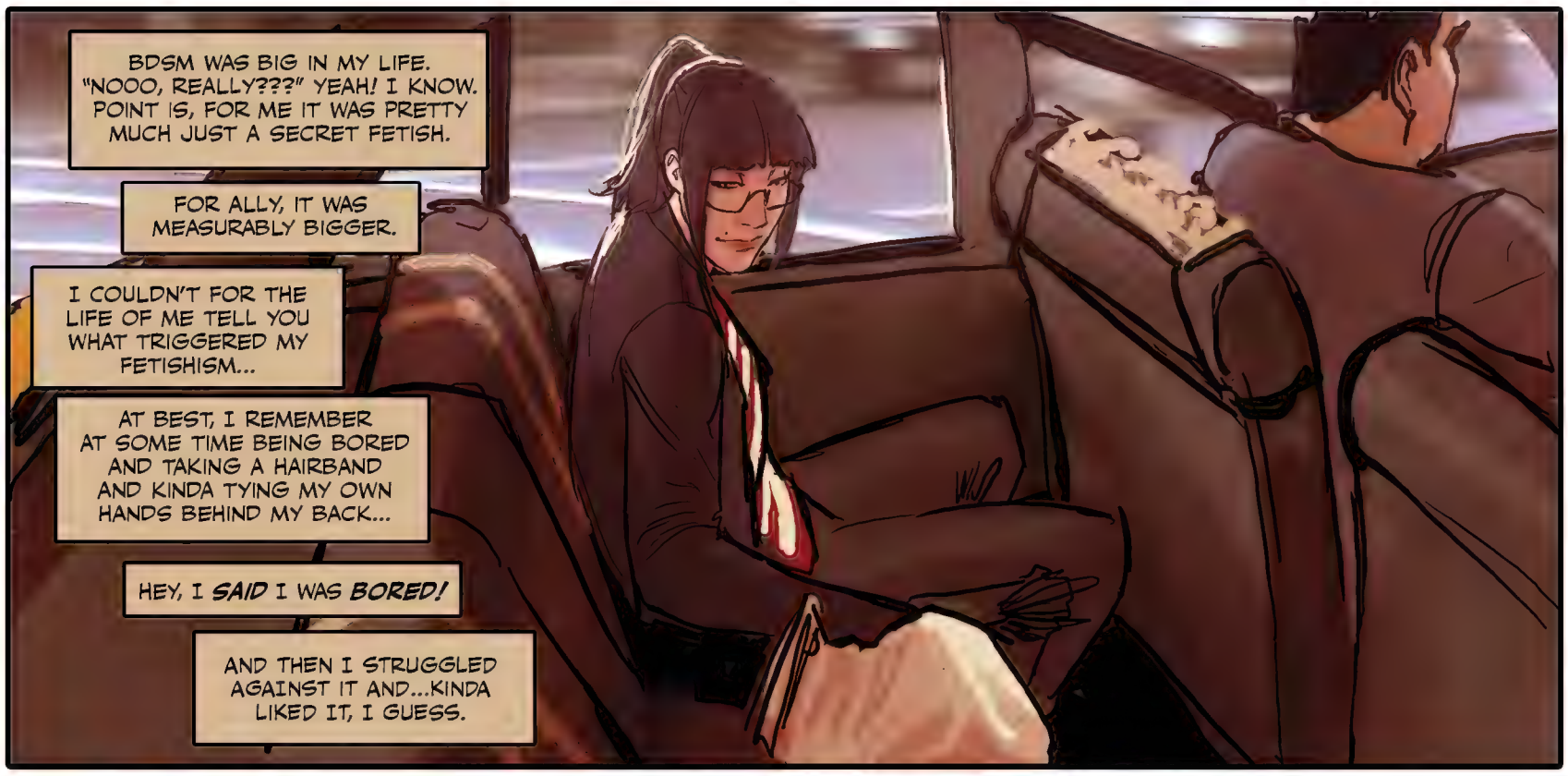
HOLY CRAP THE TWO OF YOU ACTUALLY MAKE A REALLY HOT COUPLE!
I DON'T KNOW WHO SHE IS, BUT MARRY HER NOW!
THAT RIGHT THERE IS GIRLFRIEND MATERIAL IF I EVER SAW ONE!
SO IF YOU TWO GO ON A DATE DOES SHE TAKE YOU ON A LEASH?
THAT WAS A MISTAKE!
PLEASE TELL ME THIS WAS NOT JUST A ONE-NIGHT STAND!
DAAAMN, TWO OF YOU ARE REALLY MAKING THIS WORK!
SO WHEN YOU TAKE HER TO MEET YOU PARENTS DO YOU INTRODUCE HER AS YOUR GIRLFRIEND OR YOUR MISTRESS :P

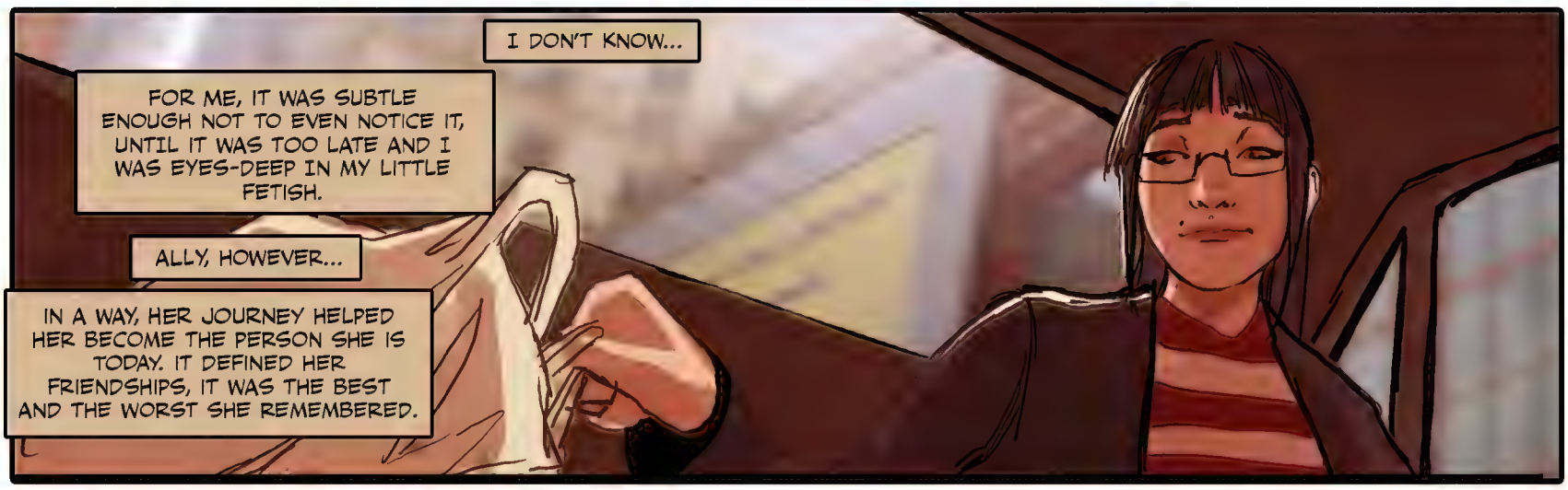
MEANWHILE...
YOU KNOW WHAT...
GET ME THREE 20 FT. PIECES OF THIS ONE AS WELL!

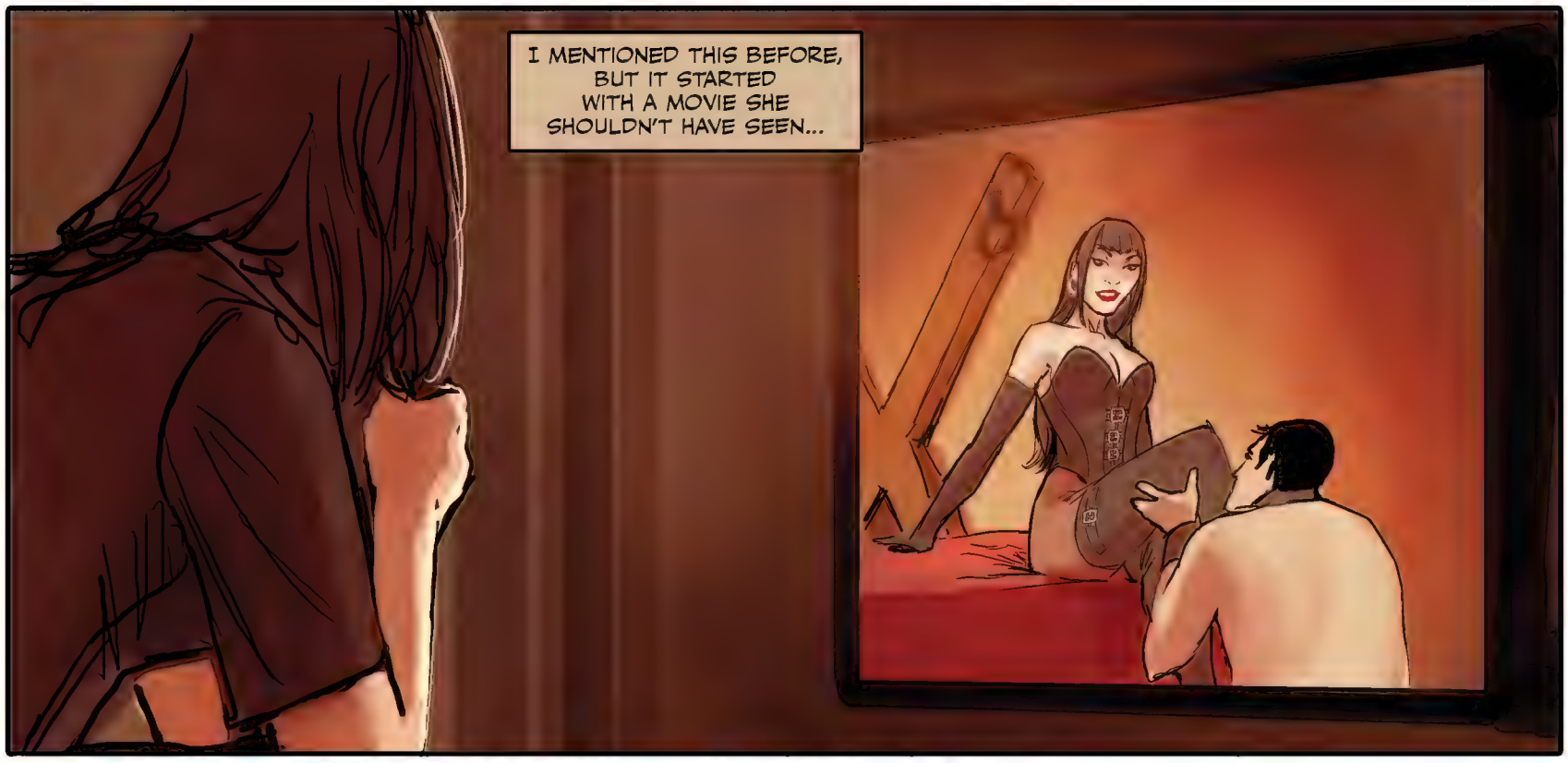
LET ME GUESS! YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE CRAFTY PEOPLE WHO WRAP FURNITURE IN ROPES?
MY COUSIN DOES THAT AS WELL.

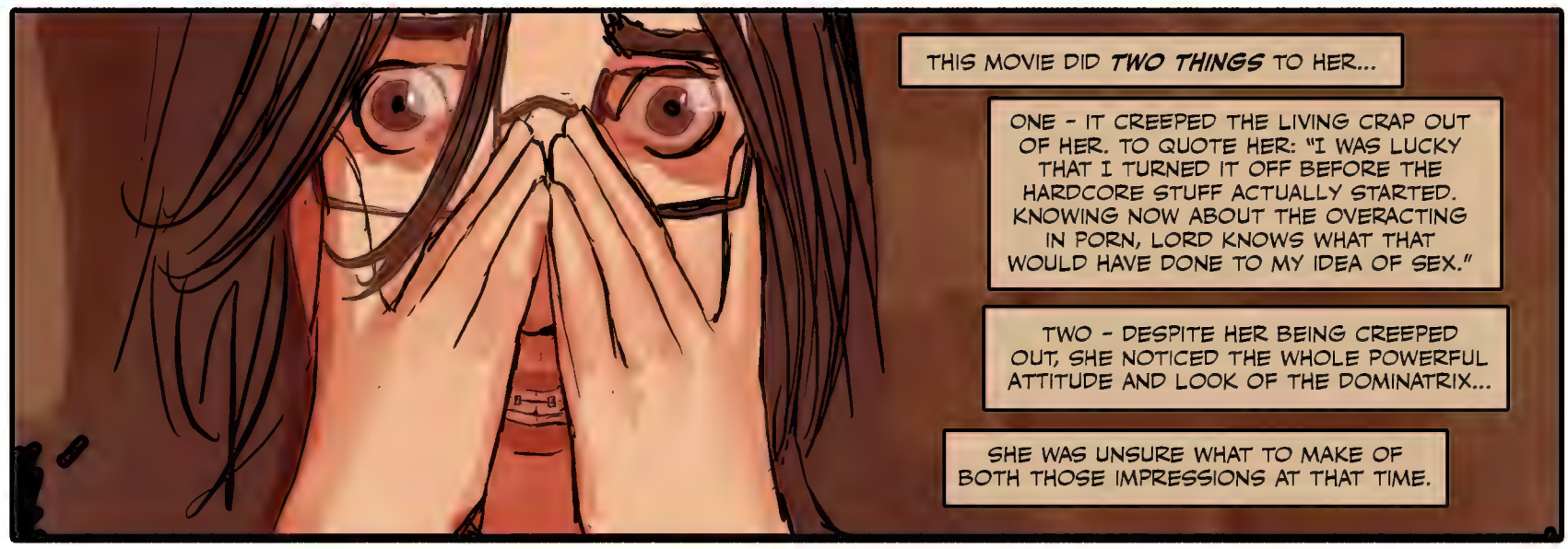

WRAPPING FURNITURE? WOW... THAT IS TRIGGERING A WHOLE 'NOTHER KIND OF IMAGERY IN MY MIND.

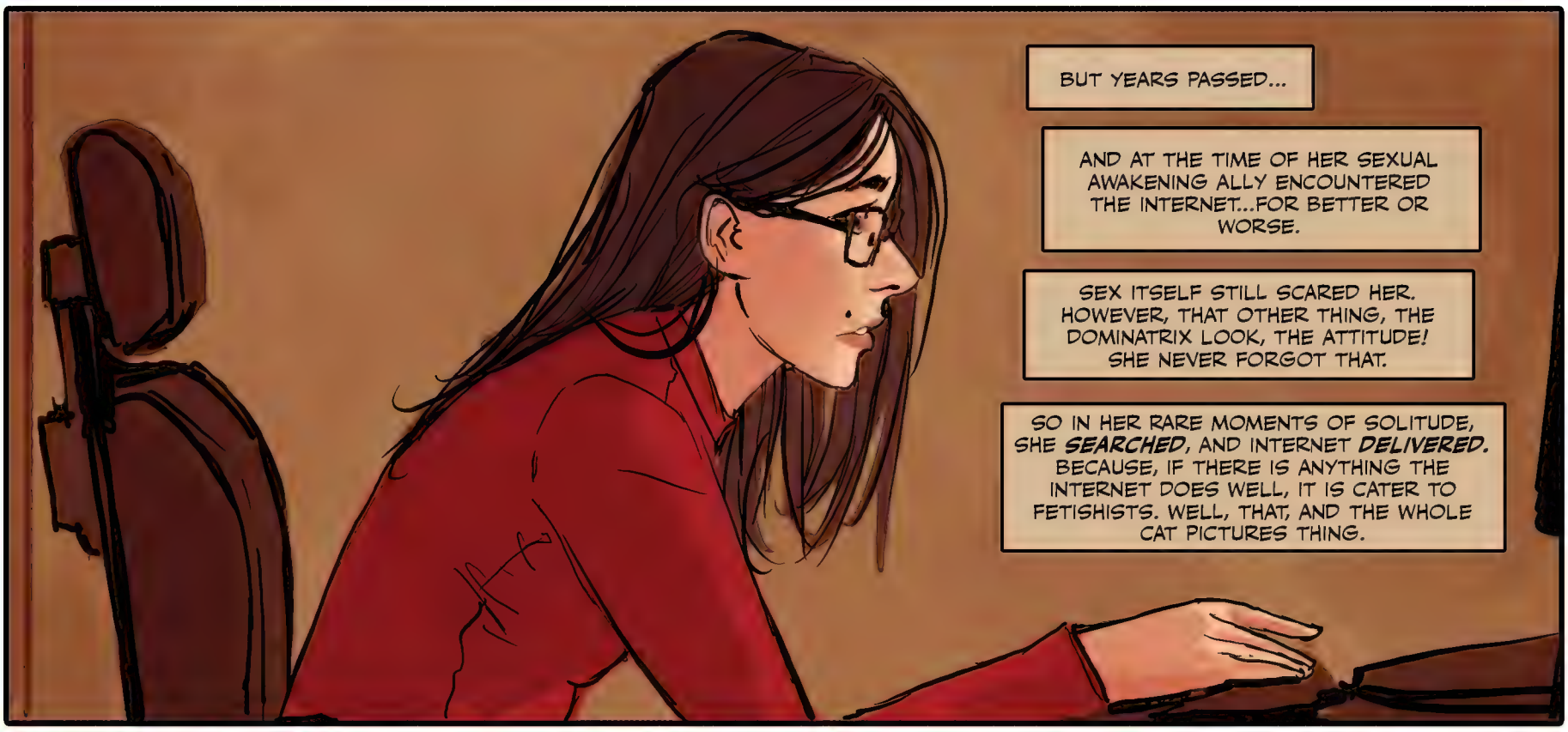

'SCUSE ME?
HUH? OH, NOTHING... I MEAN, SURE...
WRAPPING FURNITURE!


BDSM WAS BIG IN MY LIFE. "NOOO, REALLY???" YEAH! I KNOW. POINT IS, FOR ME IT WAS PRETTY MUCH JUST A SECRET FETISH.
FOR ALLY, IT WAS MEASURABLY BIGGER.
I COULDN'T FOR THE LIFE OF ME TELL YOU WHAT TRIGGERED MY FETISHISM...
AT BEST, I REMEMBER AT SOME TIME BEING BORED AND TAKING A HAIRBAND AND KINDA TYING MY OWN HANDS BEHIND MY BACK...
HEY, I *SAID* I WAS *BORED!*
AND THEN I STRUGGLED AGAINST IT AND...KINDA LIKED IT, I GUESS.

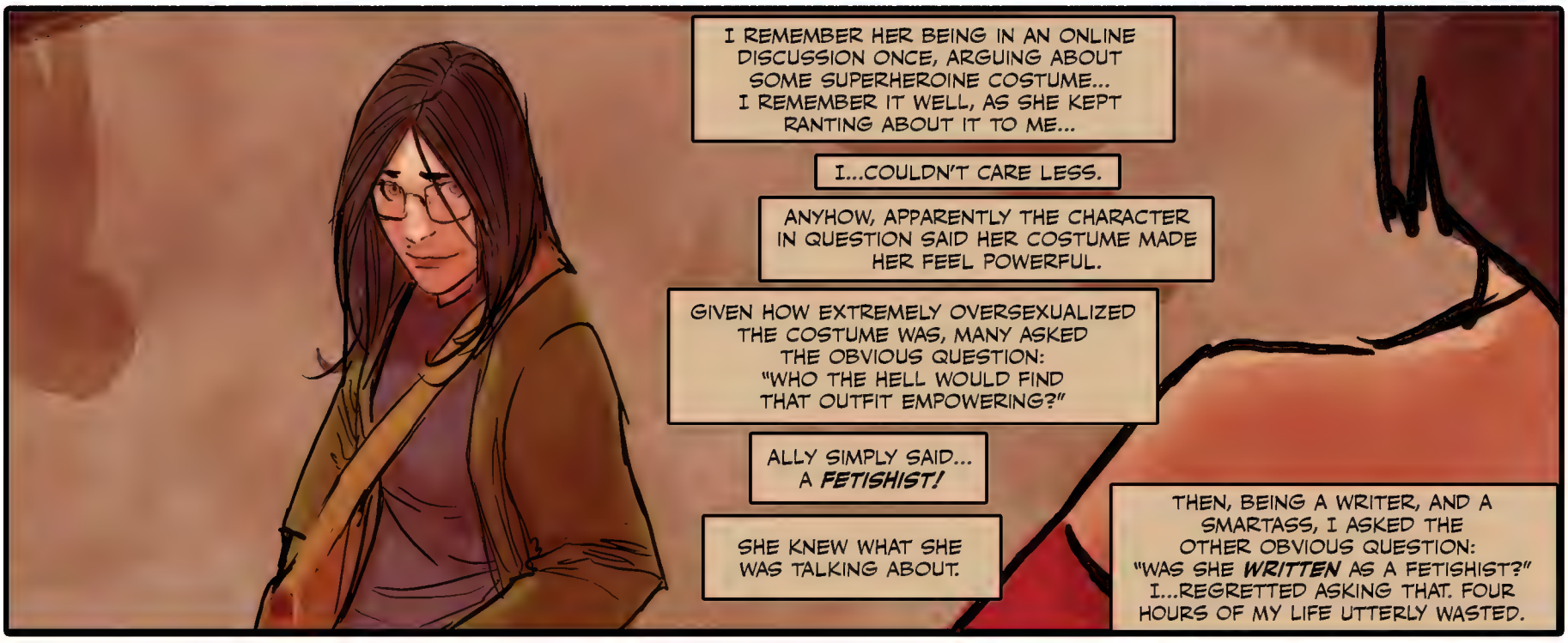

I DON'T KNOW...
FOR ME, IT WAS SUBTLE ENOUGH NOT TO EVEN NOTICE IT, UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE AND I WAS EYES-DEEP IN MY LITTLE FETISH.
ALLY, HOWEVER...
IN A WAY, HER JOURNEY HELPED HER BECOME THE PERSON SHE IS TODAY. IT DEFINED HER FRIENDSHIPS, IT WAS THE BEST AND THE WORST SHE REMEMBERED.

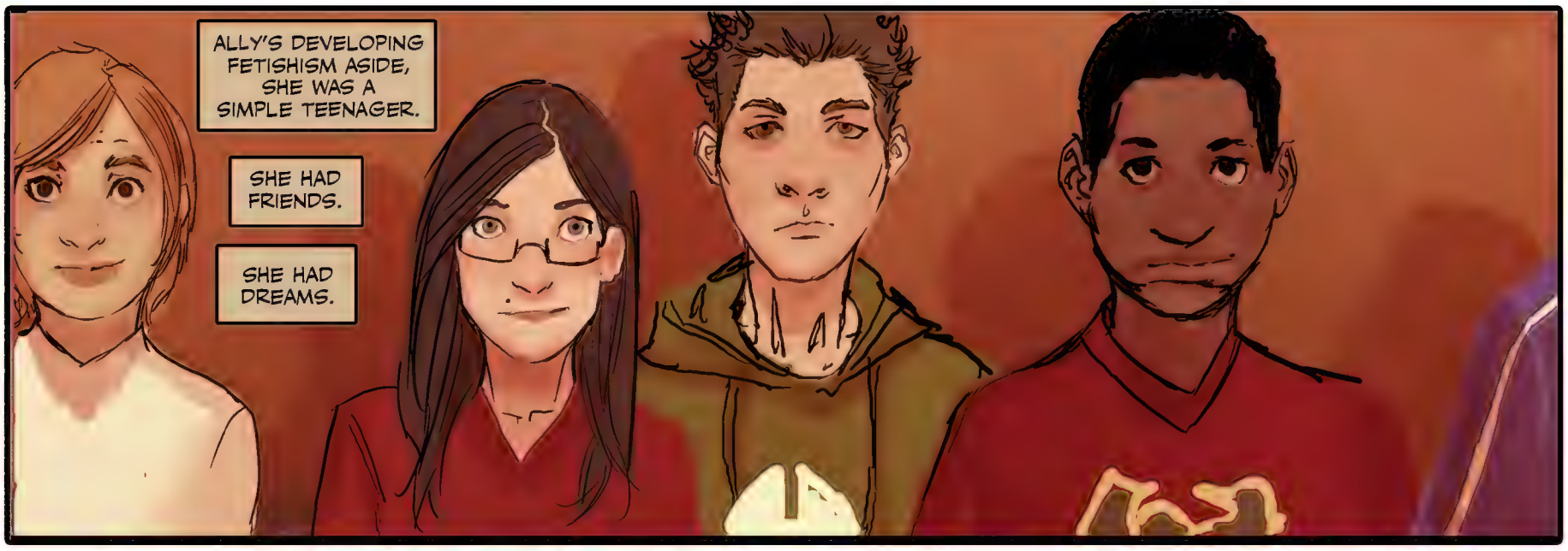

I MENTIONED THIS BEFORE, BUT IT STARTED WITH A MOVIE SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE SEEN...

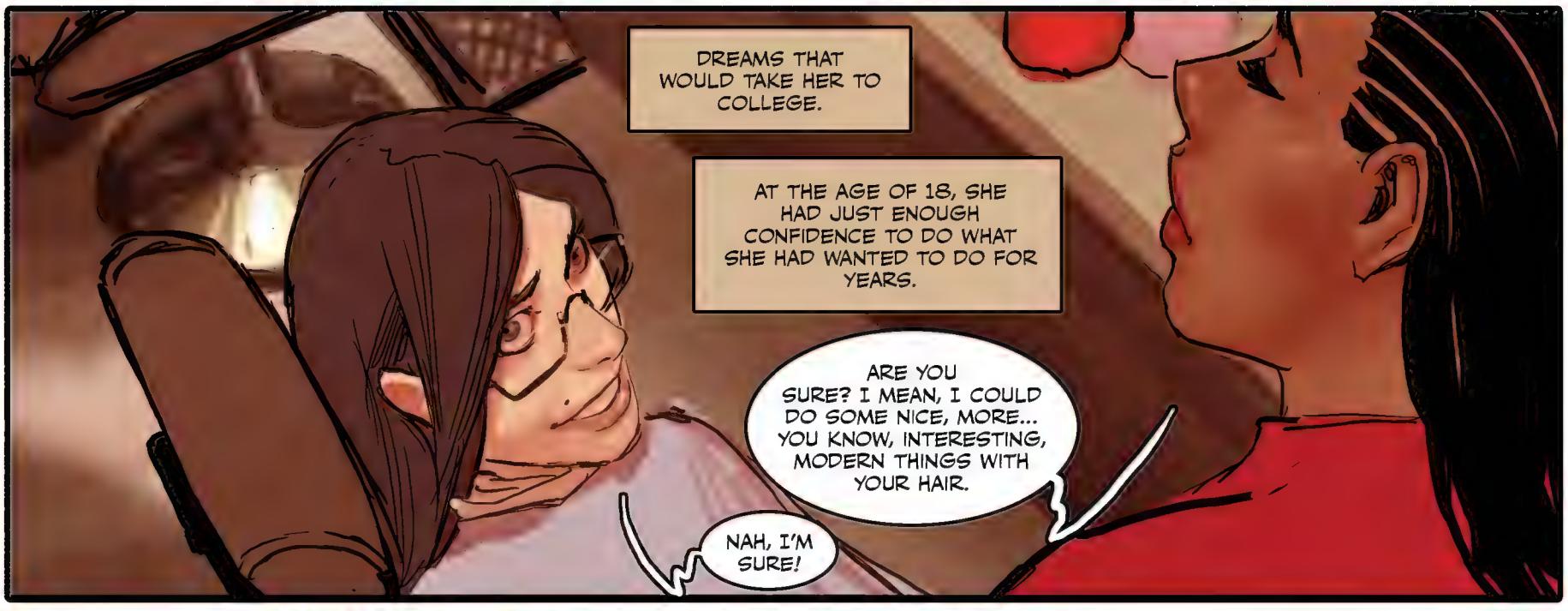

THIS MOVIE DID *TWO THINGS* TO HER...
ONE - IT CREEPED THE LIVING CRAP OUT OF HER. TO QUOTE HER: "I WAS LUCKY THAT I TURNED IT OFF BEFORE THE HARDCORE STUFF ACTUALLY STARTED. KNOWING NOW ABOUT THE OVERACTING IN PORN, LORD KNOWS WHAT THAT WOULD HAVE DONE TO MY IDEA OF SEX."
TWO - DESPITE HER BEING CREEPED OUT, SHE NOTICED THE WHOLE POWERFUL ATTITUDE AND LOOK OF THE DOMINATRIX...
SHE WAS UNSURE WHAT TO MAKE OF BOTH THOSE IMPRESSIONS AT THAT TIME.

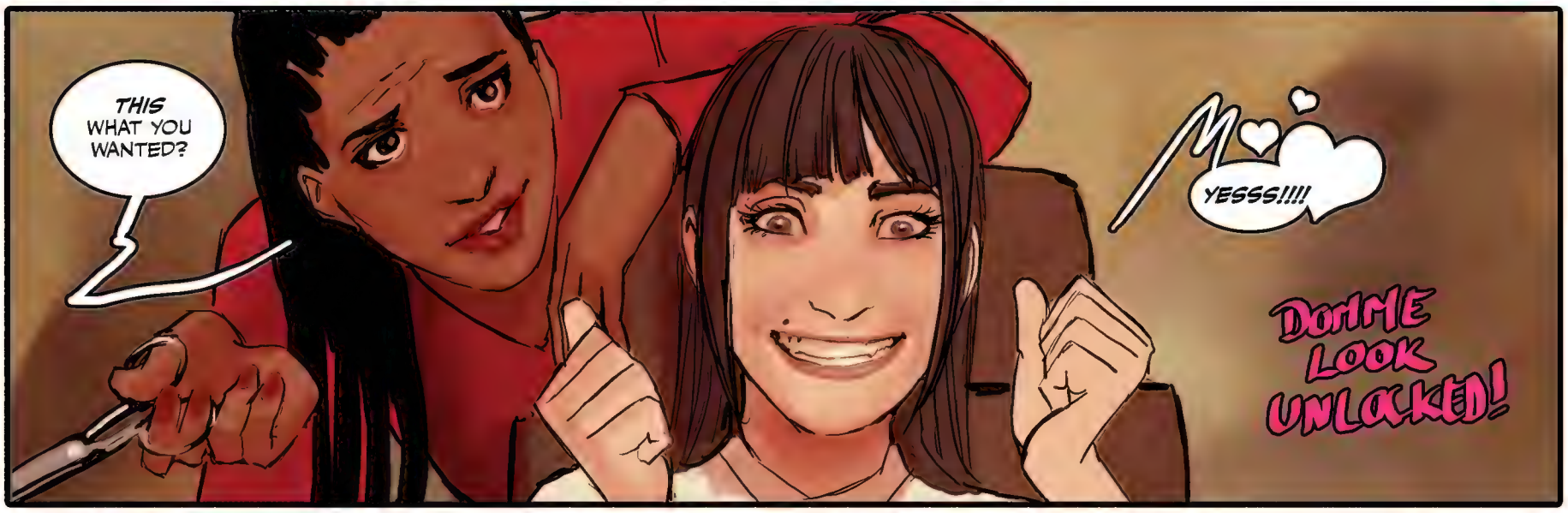

BUT YEARS PASSED...
AND AT THE TIME OF HER SEXUAL AWAKENING ALLY ENCOUNTERED THE INTERNET...FOR BETTER OR WORSE.
SEX ITSELF STILL SCARED HER. HOWEVER, THAT OTHER THING, THE DOMINATRIX LOOK, THE ATTITUDE! SHE NEVER FORGOT THAT.
SO IN HER RARE MOMENTS OF SOLITUDE, SHE SEARCHED, AND INTERNET DELIVERED. BECAUSE, IF THERE IS ANYTHING THE INTERNET DOES WELL, IT IS CATER TO FETISHISTS. WELL, THAT, AND THE WHOLE CAT PICTURES THING.

WITH HER TASTES DEVELOPING, SHE SPENT QUITE A BIT OF HER HIGH SCHOOL AGE THINKING...IMAGINING...
CONSIDERING THE IDEA OF HERSELF FEELING POWERFUL...
CONFIDENT.


I REMEMBER HER BEING IN AN ONLINE DISCUSSION ONCE, ARGUING ABOUT SOME SUPERHEROINE COSTUME... I REMEMBER IT WELL, AS SHE KEPT RANTING ABOUT IT TO ME...
I...COULDN'T CARE LESS.
ANYHOW, APPARENTLY THE CHARACTER IN QUESTION SAID HER COSTUME MADE HER FEEL POWERFUL.
GIVEN HOW EXTREMELY OVERSEXUALIZED THE COSTUME WAS, MANY ASKED THE OBVIOUS QUESTION: "WHO THE HELL WOULD FIND THAT OUTFIT EMPOWERING?"
ALLY SIMPLY SAID... A FETISHIST!
SHE KNEW WHAT SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT.
THEN, BEING A WRITER, AND A SMARTASS, I ASKED THE OTHER OBVIOUS QUESTION: "WAS SHE WRITTEN AS A FETISHIST?" I...REGRETTED ASKING THAT. FOUR HOURS OF MY LIFE UTTERLY WASTED.


ALLY'S DEVELOPING FETISHISM ASIDE, SHE WAS A SIMPLE TEENAGER.
SHE HAD FRIENDS.
SHE HAD DREAMS.


DREAMS THAT WOULD TAKE HER TO COLLEGE.
AT THE AGE OF 18, SHE HAD JUST ENOUGH CONFIDENCE TO DO WHAT SHE HAD WANTED TO DO FOR YEARS.
ARE YOU SURE? I MEAN, I COULD DO SOME NICE, MORE... YOU KNOW, INTERESTING, MODERN THINGS WITH YOUR HAIR.
NAH, I'M SURE!


THIS WHAT YOU WANTED?
YESSS!!!!
DOMME LOOK UNLOCKED!

THINGS CHANGED IN COLLEGE.
SHE FOUND HER CONFIDENCE.
HER COMPUTER SKILLS LANDED HER QUITE A FEW SIMPLE, YET LUCRATIVE SYSTEMS MAINTENANCE GIGS.
SHE WAS ENDLESSLY AMUSED WITH HOW FEW PEOPLE EVER DEFRAGMENTED THEIR DRIVES IN THOSE DAYS, AND EVEN SUCH A SIMPLE TASK GOT HER PAID...
WITH THAT MONEY, SHE FINALLY FULFILLED HER LONG-DREAMT DREAM.

SHE BOUGHT HER FIRST OUTFIT...

THANK YOU, COME AGAIN!

Y-YEAH...

SO? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I WILL REFER YOU TO THE STANDING OVATION.

BUT I GOTTA SAY...THAT LOOKS LIKE IT COST AN ARM AND A LEG!

HEH...WELL IT'S NOT LIKE I PLAN TO MAKE A HABIT OF IT!

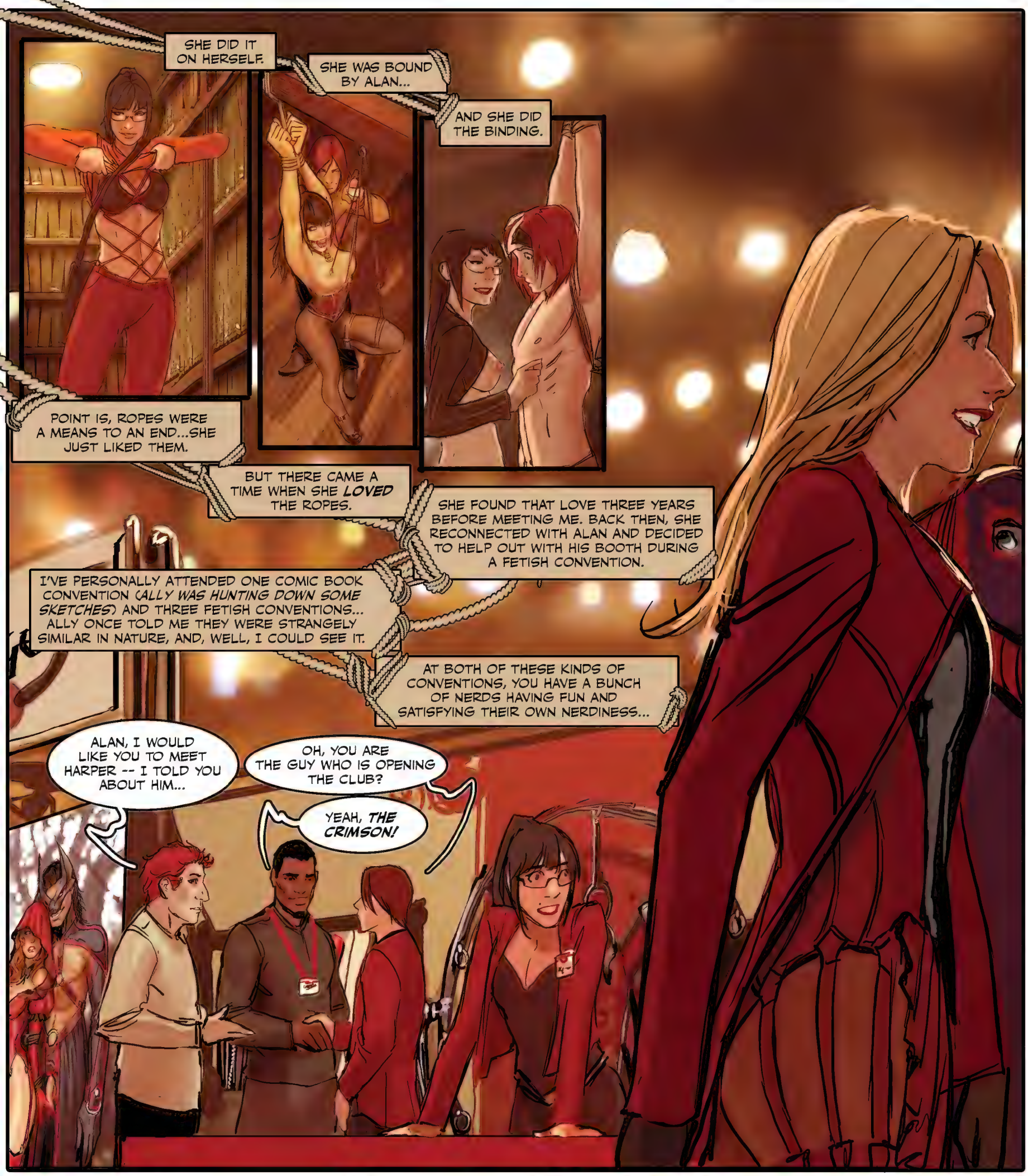
YOU KNOW... GIVEN THE RIGHT MATERIALS I'M PRETTY SURE I COULD ***MAKE*** SOMETHING LIKE THIS!

YOU TALK TOO MUCH...LET'S PUT THAT TONGUE TO ***BETTER*** USE.

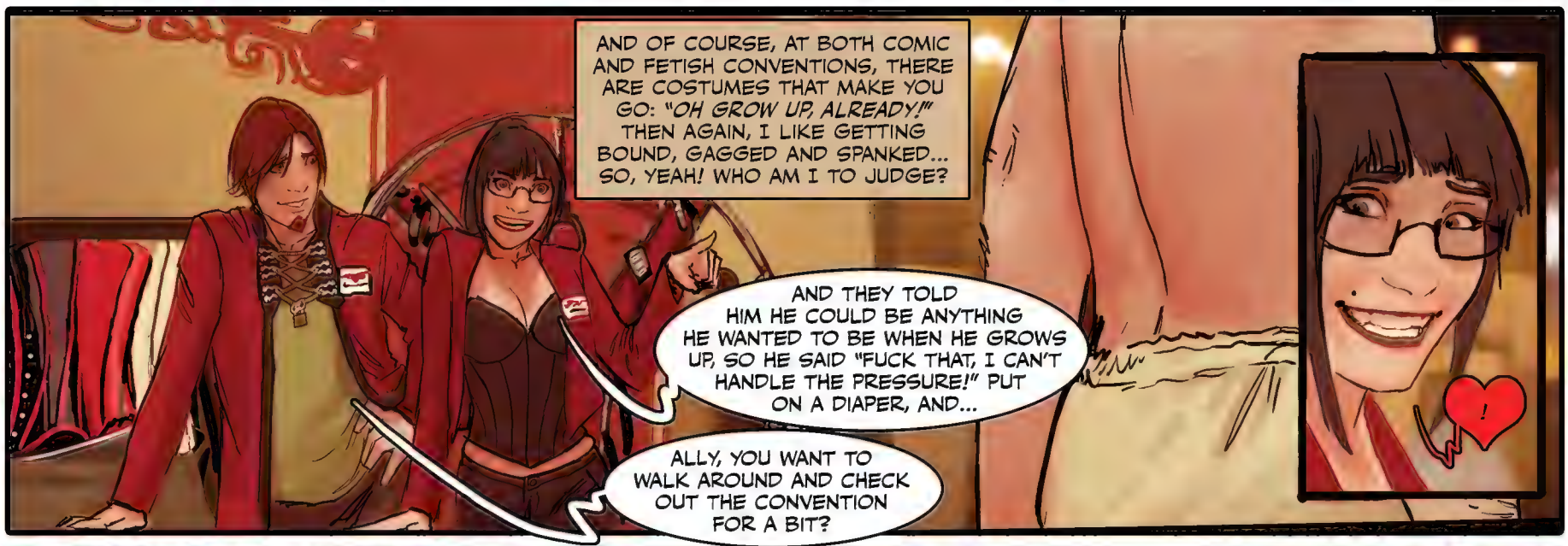
YUP...I MAY HAVE BEEN ALLY'S FIRST REAL SUB, BUT A LOT OF FIRST THINGS SHE TRIED WITH ALAN...

WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE REASON FOR THIS WHOLE SEGUE...

IT WAS WITH ALAN THAT ALLY FIRST EXPERIMENTED WITH ROPE BONDAGE.

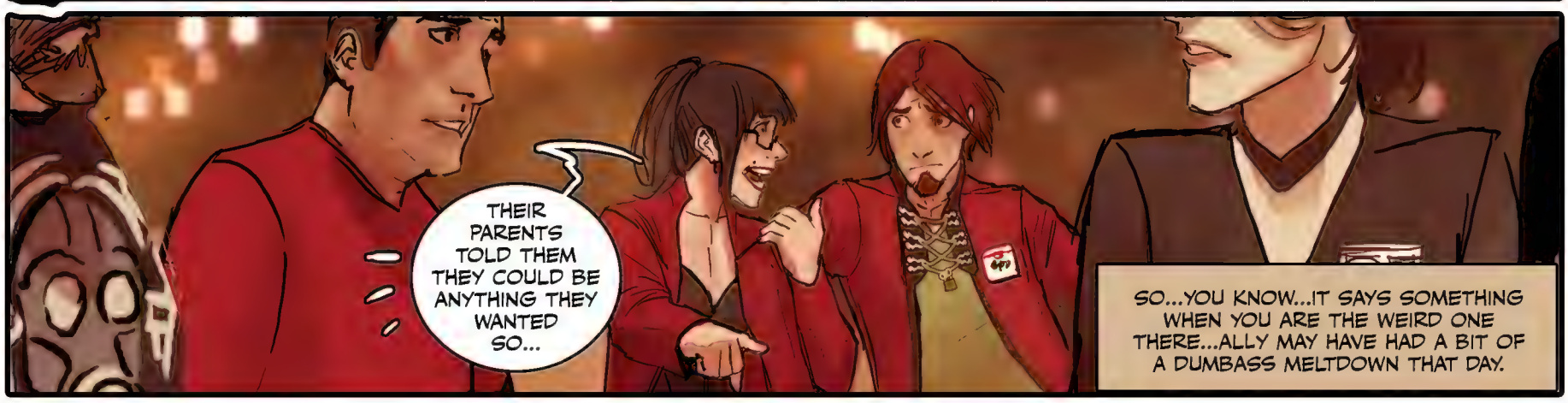

SHE DID IT ON HERSELF.
SHE WAS BOUND BY ALAN...
AND SHE DID THE BINDING.
POINT IS, ROPES WERE A MEANS TO AN END...SHE JUST LIKED THEM.
BUT THERE CAME A TIME WHEN SHE *LOVED* THE ROPES.
SHE FOUND THAT LOVE THREE YEARS BEFORE MEETING ME. BACK THEN, SHE RECONNECTED WITH ALAN AND DECIDED TO HELP OUT WITH HIS BOOTH DURING A FETISH CONVENTION.
I'VE PERSONALLY ATTENDED ONE COMIC BOOK CONVENTION (*ALLY WAS HUNTING DOWN SOME SKETCHES*) AND THREE FETISH CONVENTIONS... ALLY ONCE TOLD ME THEY WERE STRANGELY SIMILAR IN NATURE, AND, WELL, I COULD SEE IT.
AT BOTH OF THESE KINDS OF CONVENTIONS, YOU HAVE A BUNCH OF NERDS HAVING FUN AND SATISFYING THEIR OWN NERDINESS...
ALAN, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO MEET HARPER -- I TOLD YOU ABOUT HIM...
OH, YOU ARE THE GUY WHO IS OPENING THE CLUB?
YEAH, *THE CRIMSON!*

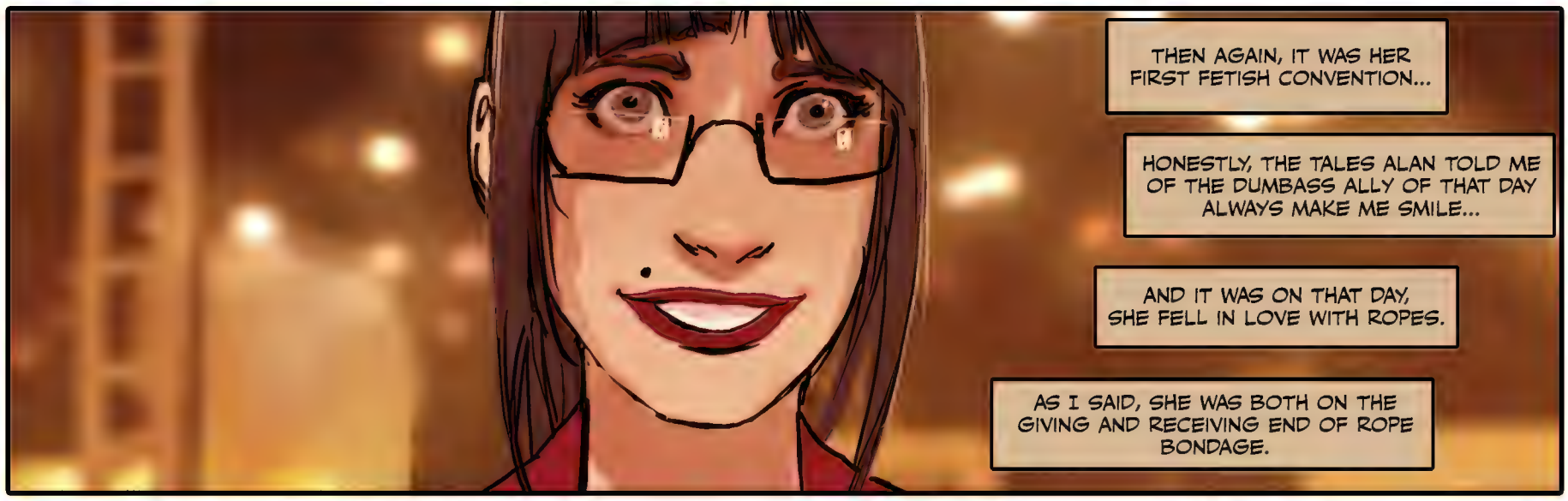
MANY PEOPLE WEARING COSTUMES... SOME SEXY, SOME IMPRESSIVE, SOME DOWNRIGHT ODD...
HEY ALAN, CHECK THIS GUY... HIS PARENTS TOLD HIM HE COULD BE *ANYTHING* HE WANTED IN LIFE -- SO HE BECAME A *HORSE!*

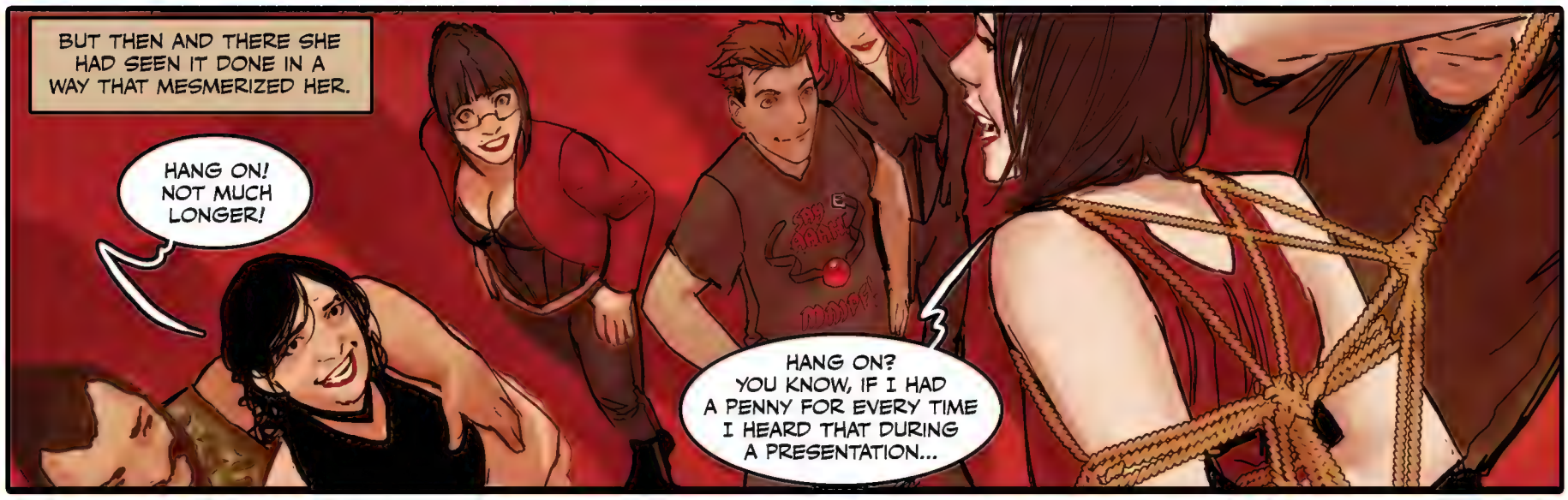

AND OF COURSE, AT BOTH COMIC AND FETISH CONVENTIONS, THERE ARE COSTUMES THAT MAKE YOU GO: "OH GROW UP, ALREADY!" THEN AGAIN, I LIKE GETTING BOUND, GAGGED AND SPANKED... SO, YEAH! WHO AM I TO JUDGE?
AND THEY TOLD HIM HE COULD BE ANYTHING HE WANTED TO BE WHEN HE GROWS UP, SO HE SAID "FUCK THAT, I CAN'T HANDLE THE PRESSURE!" PUT ON A DIAPER, AND...
ALLY, YOU WANT TO WALK AROUND AND CHECK OUT THE CONVENTION FOR A BIT?
!

IF THERE IS ONE THING I LIKED ABOUT THESE CONVENTIONS, IT WAS THE CASUAL JOKING...IT WAS WEIRD, YOU KNOW...
WE ARE ALL ODD IN OUR OWN WAYS, AND IN THESE PLACES YOU ENCOUNTER THE ODDNESS OF OTHERS FACE-TO-FACE.
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAVE THESE IN DIFFERENT SIZES?
NOT HERE, THESE ARE JUST OUR TOP SELLER SIZES.
SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
SO, WHERE DID YOU HIDE THE LIGHT SWITCH?
THIS IS THE WEIRDEST THING I HAVE EVER DONE... AND THAT'S SAYING SOMETHING.
WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW?
HEH, YOU SHOULD TRY IT FROM MY PERSPECTIVE!

THESE PLACES WERE KIND OF A CELEBRATION OF ODDITY...
BUT WE DO MANUFACTURE THEM ON DEMAND, IF YOU WANT WE CAN TAKE SOME MEASUREMENTS AND...

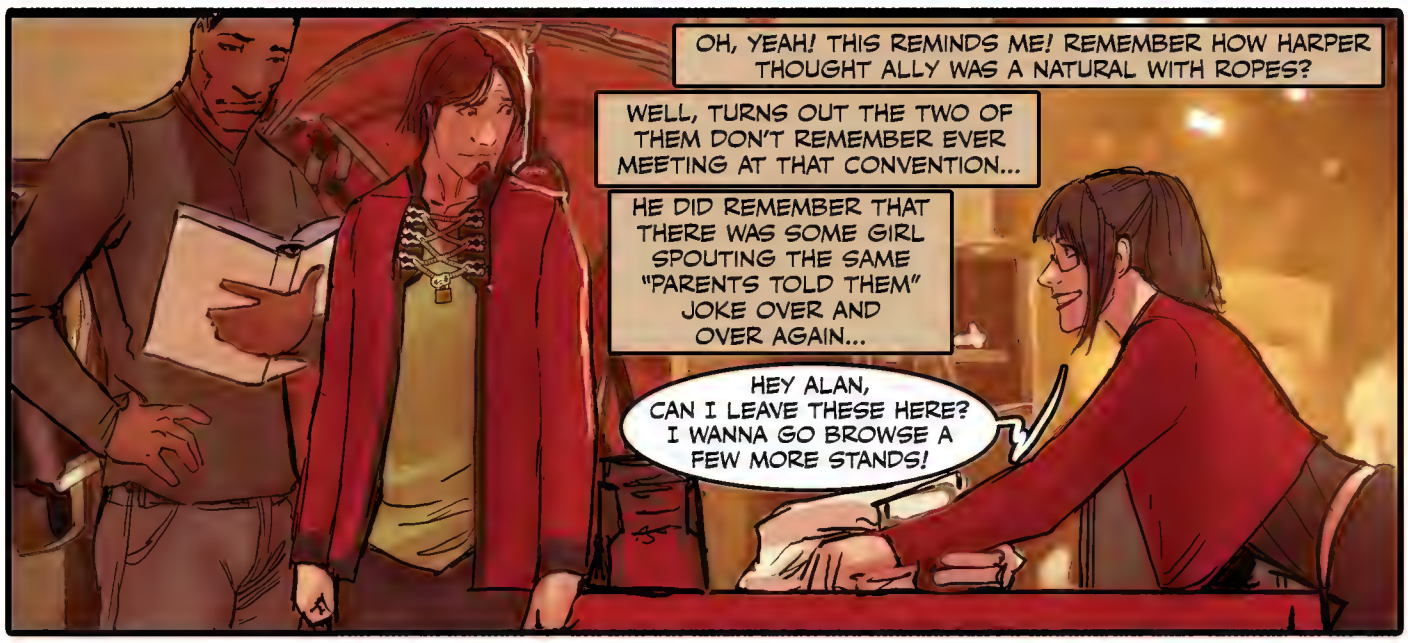

THEIR PARENTS TOLD THEM THEY COULD BE ANYTHING THEY WANTED SO...
SO...YOU KNOW...IT SAYS SOMETHING WHEN YOU ARE THE WEIRD ONE THERE...ALLY MAY HAVE HAD A BIT OF A DUMBASS MELTDOWN THAT DAY.

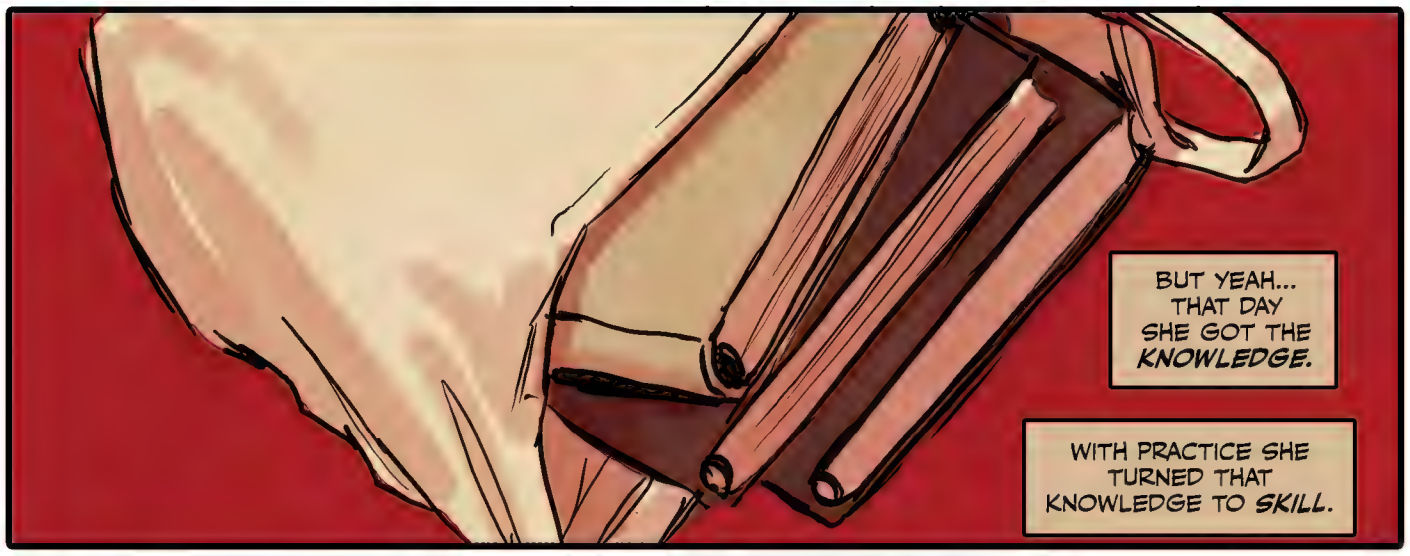

THEN AGAIN, IT WAS HER FIRST FETISH CONVENTION...
HONESTLY, THE TALES ALAN TOLD ME OF THE DUMBASS ALLY OF THAT DAY ALWAYS MAKE ME SMILE...
AND IT WAS ON THAT DAY, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH ROPES.
AS I SAID, SHE WAS BOTH ON THE GIVING AND RECEIVING END OF ROPE BONDAGE.

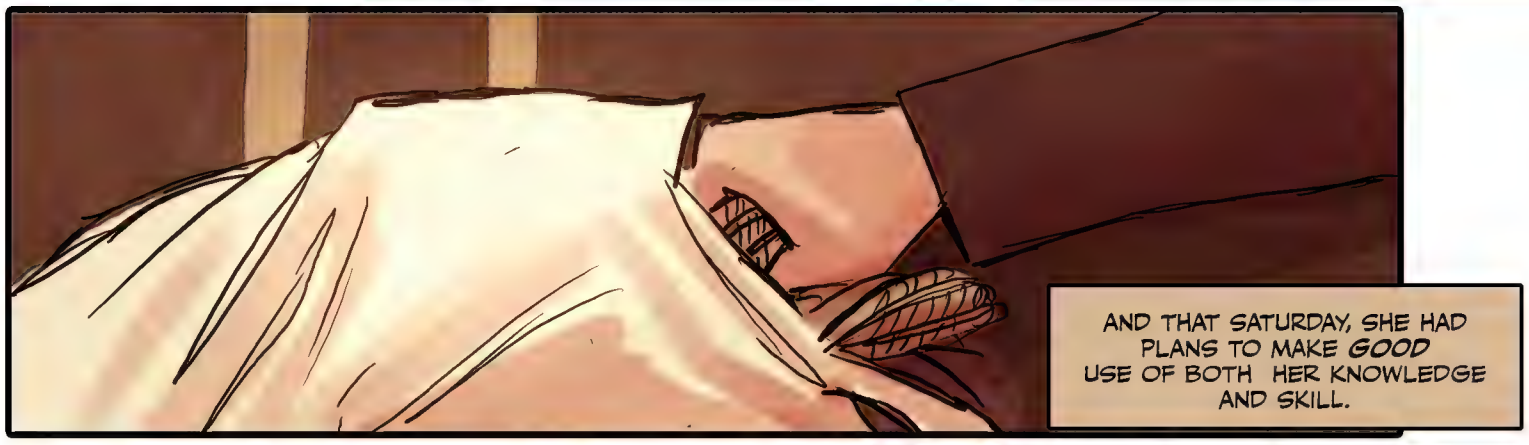

BUT THEN AND THERE SHE HAD SEEN IT DONE IN A WAY THAT MESMERIZED HER.
HANG ON! NOT MUCH LONGER!
HANG ON? YOU KNOW, IF I HAD A PENNY FOR EVERY TIME I HEARD THAT DURING A PRESENTATION...

VAL, STRIKE A POSE!
WILL A FLAMINGO POSE DO...CAUSE...YOU KNOW IT'S THE ONLY ONE I CAN DO RIGHT NOW!

WOW, DUDE! YOU ARE PRODUCTIVE!
HEH! STILL NOT PRODUCTIVE ENOUGH TO MAKE A PROPER CATALOGUE, BUT SOME DAY...
ALLY SPENT OVER AN HOUR JUST BROWSING THE ROPE BONDAGE BOOKS THAT DAY...

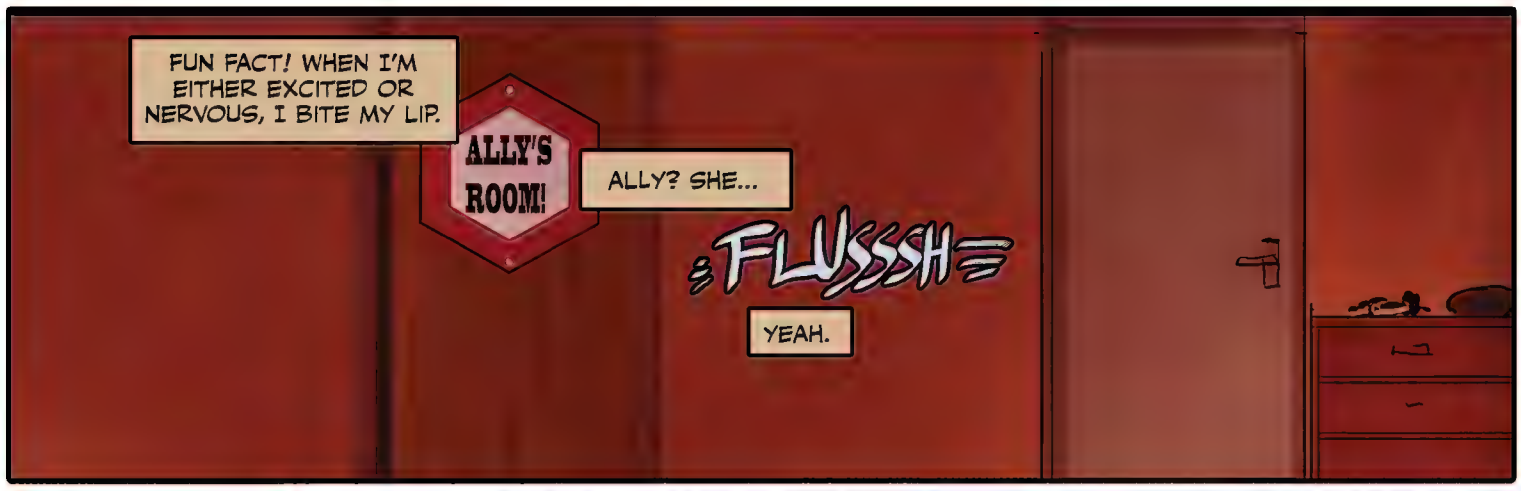

OH, YEAH! THIS REMINDS ME! REMEMBER HOW HARPER THOUGHT ALLY WAS A NATURAL WITH ROPES?
WELL, TURNS OUT THE TWO OF THEM DON'T REMEMBER EVER MEETING AT THAT CONVENTION...
HE DID REMEMBER THAT THERE WAS SOME GIRL SPOUTING THE SAME "PARENTS TOLD THEM" JOKE OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
HEY ALAN, CAN I LEAVE THESE HERE? I WANNA GO BROWSE A FEW MORE STANDS!


BUT YEAH... THAT DAY SHE GOT THE *KNOWLEDGE.*
WITH PRACTICE SHE TURNED THAT KNOWLEDGE TO *SKILL.*


AND THAT SATURDAY, SHE HAD PLANS TO MAKE *GOOD* USE OF BOTH HER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL.

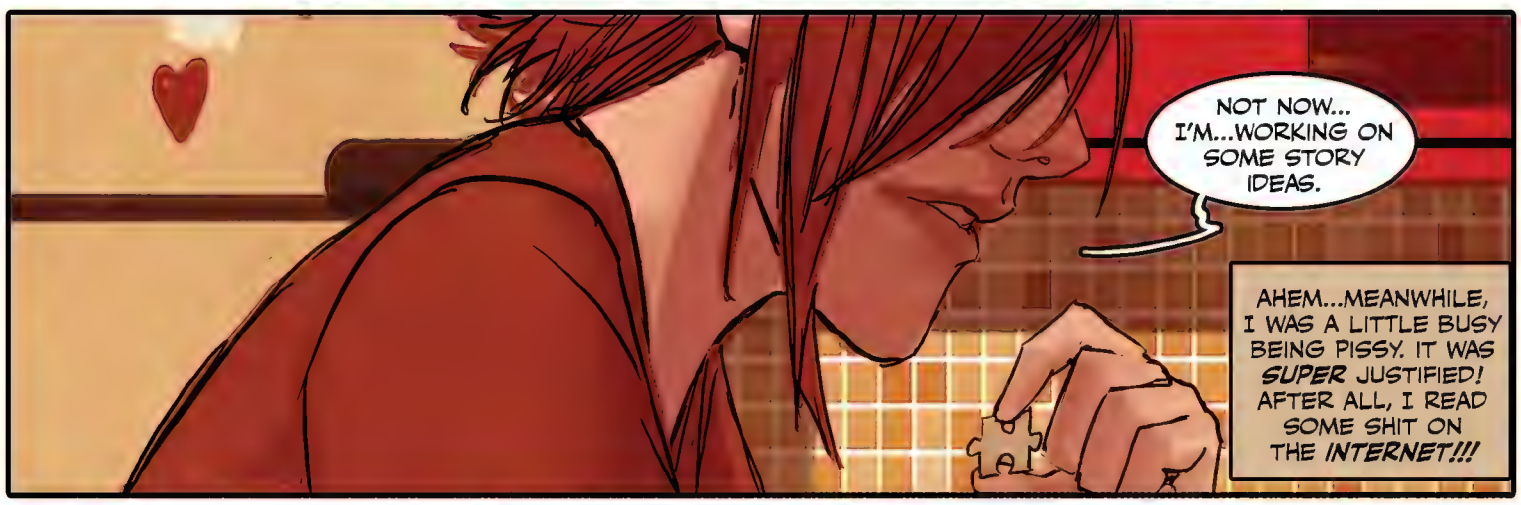
BIG PLANS...

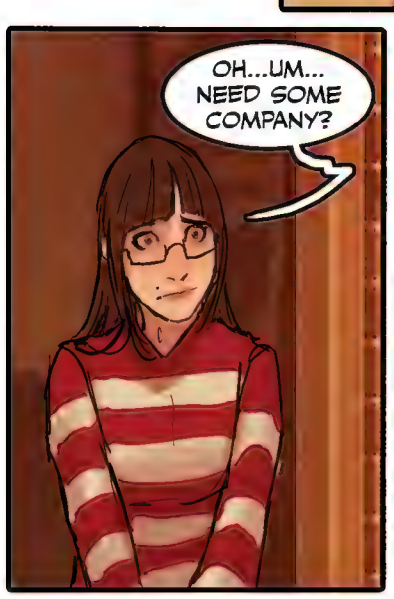
GUT-WRENCHING...SHOULD-PROBABLY-VISIT-THE-BATHROOM-FIRST PLANS...


FUN FACT! WHEN I'M EITHER EXCITED OR NERVOUS, I BITE MY LIP.
ALLY'S ROOM!
ALLY? SHE...
FLUSSSH
YEAH.

UGH, WUSSY-ASS STOMACH!
AND SHE WAS CRAZY NERVOUS...
THIS WAS A BIG MOMENT FOR HER.
SHE KNEW I LIKED ROPE BONDAGE.

SHE WANTED TO DO THIS FOR ME.
HEY, LISA! I'M BACK!
HEY...
SO, UMMM, I HAD AN IDEA...

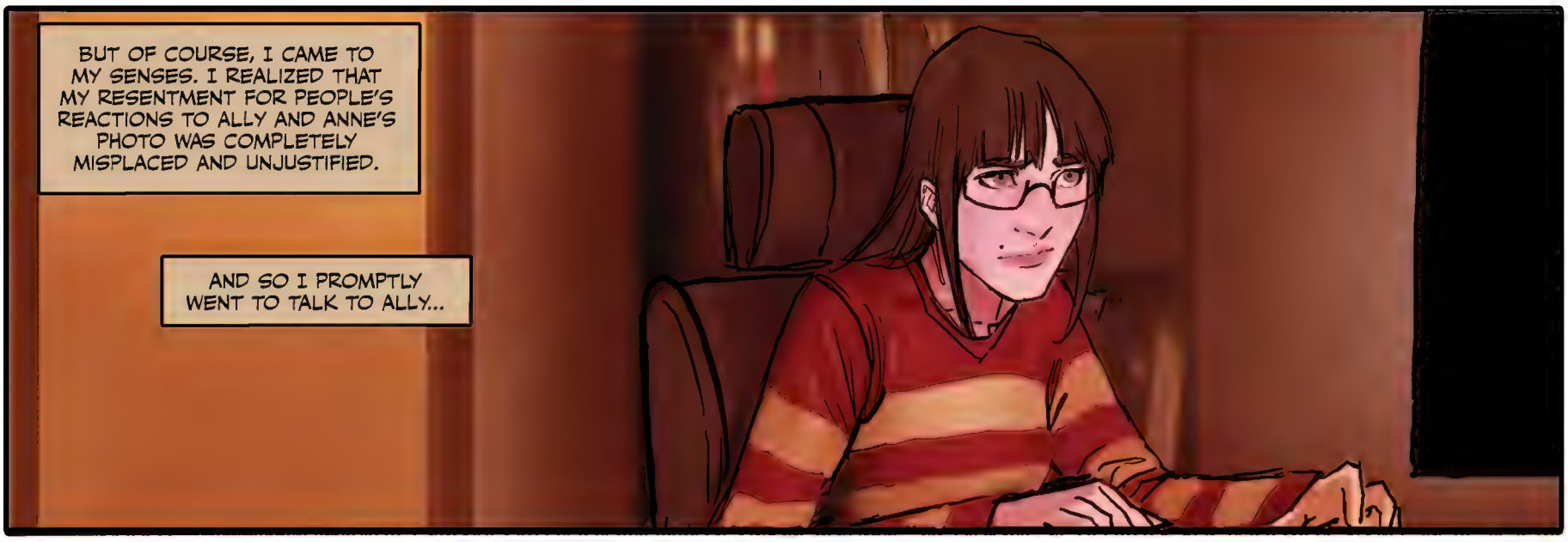

NOT NOW... I'M...WORKING ON SOME STORY IDEAS.
AHEM...MEANWHILE, I WAS A LITTLE BUSY BEING PISSY. IT WAS *SUPER* JUSTIFIED! AFTER ALL, I READ SOME SHIT ON THE *INTERNET!!!*

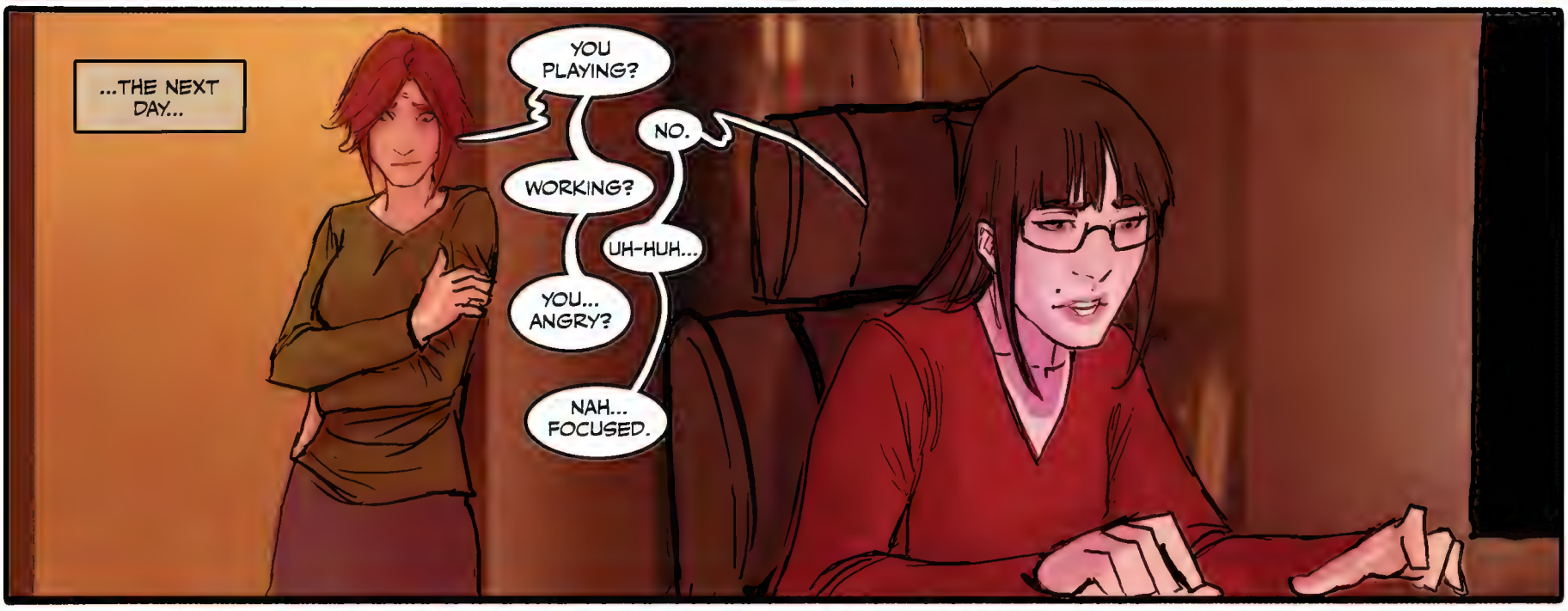

OH...UM... NEED SOME COMPANY?

NAH...

OOKAAY...

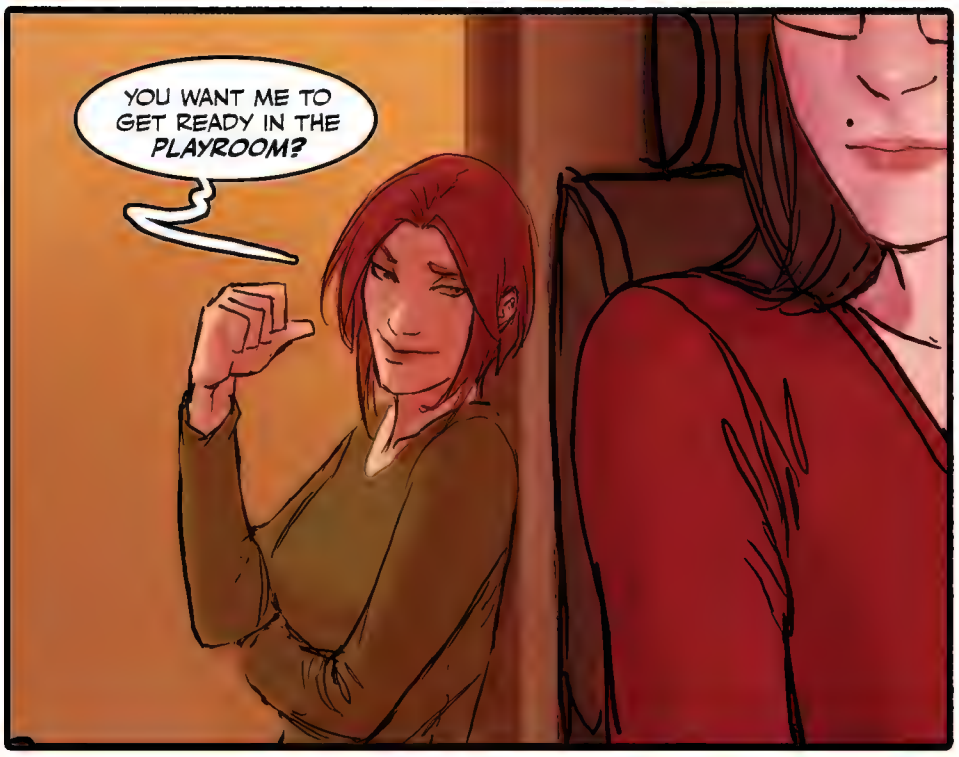
I GUESS... I'LL BE IN MY ROOM IF YOU NEED ME.
'KAY...

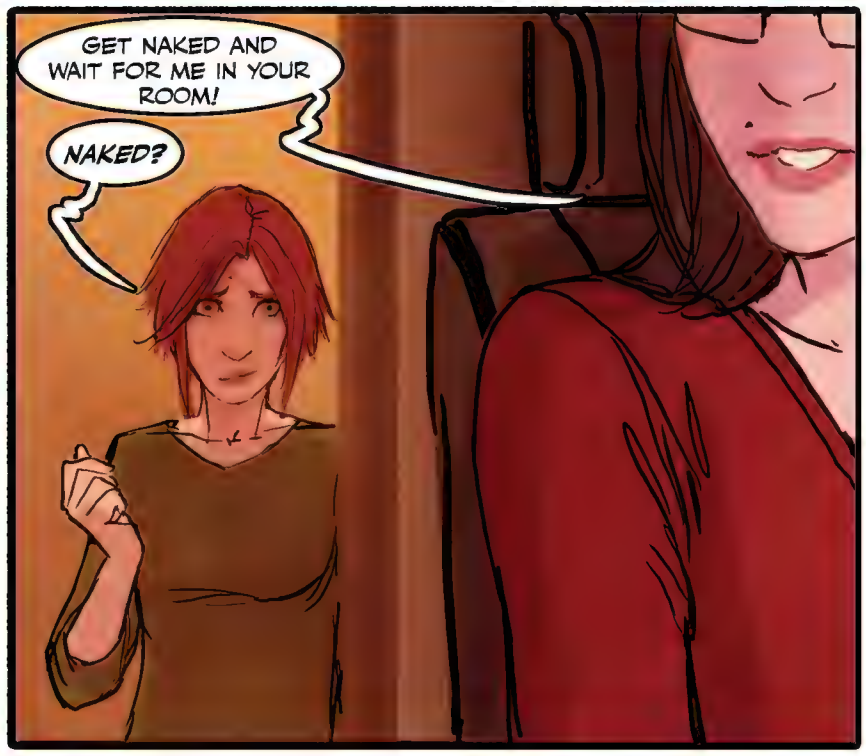

BUT OF COURSE, I CAME TO MY SENSES. I REALIZED THAT MY RESENTMENT FOR PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO ALLY AND ANNE'S PHOTO WAS COMPLETELY MISPLACED AND UNJUSTIFIED.
AND SO I PROMPTLY WENT TO TALK TO ALLY...


...THE NEXT DAY...
YOU PLAYING?
NO.
WORKING?
UH-HUH...
YOU... ANGRY?
NAH... FOCUSED.

RIGHT...
SO...I GUESS YOU DON'T NEED ME DISTRACTING YOU...

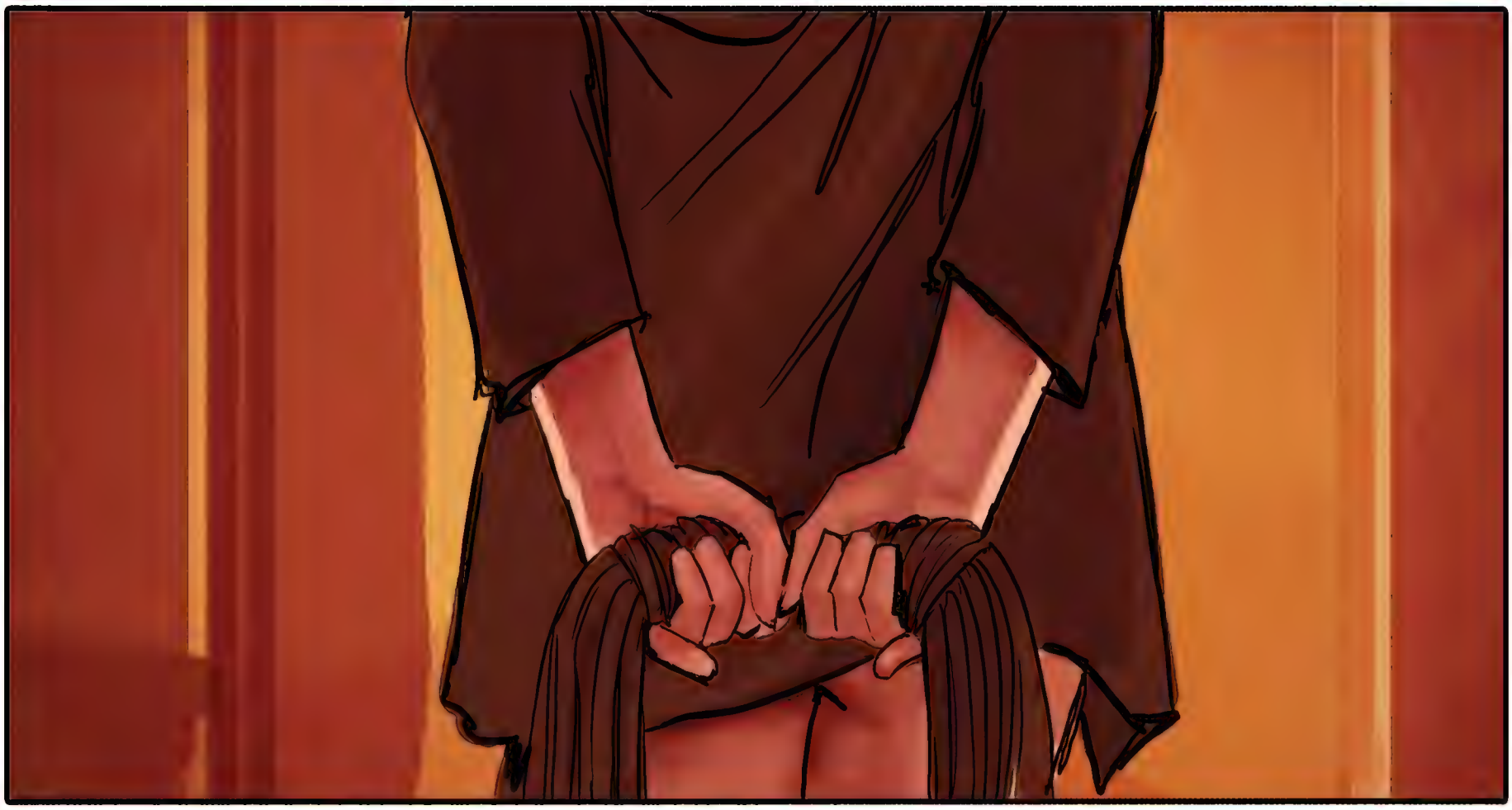
MISTRESS?


YOU WANT ME TO GET READY IN THE PLAYROOM?


GET NAKED AND WAIT FOR ME IN YOUR ROOM!
NAKED?

SIGH...

OKAY... I GOT THIS!



WHY, MISS *WILLIAMS!* I DO BELIEVE YOU ARE TRYING TO *SEDUCE* ME!
YOU'RE A *FETISHIST!* I LACK THE NECESSARY *GIFTWRAPPING* TO SEDUCE YOU!

UHM...

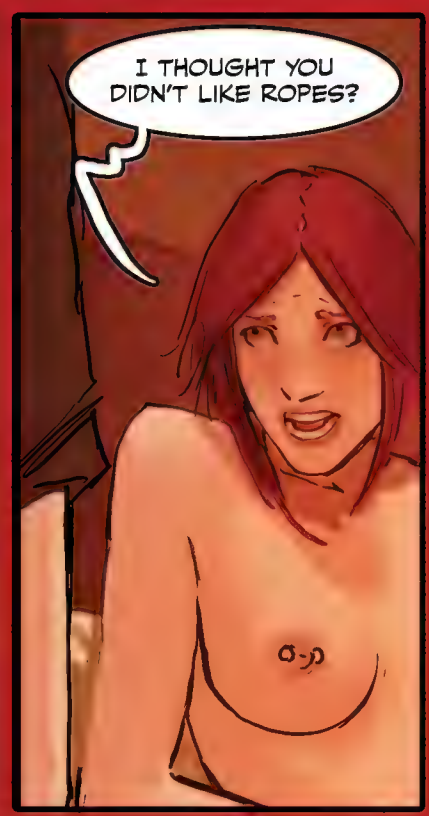
OH, COME ON! STRAPS? BELTS AND BUCKLES? *GIFTWRAPPING?* YOU CAN'T TELL ME IT DOESN'T WORK!

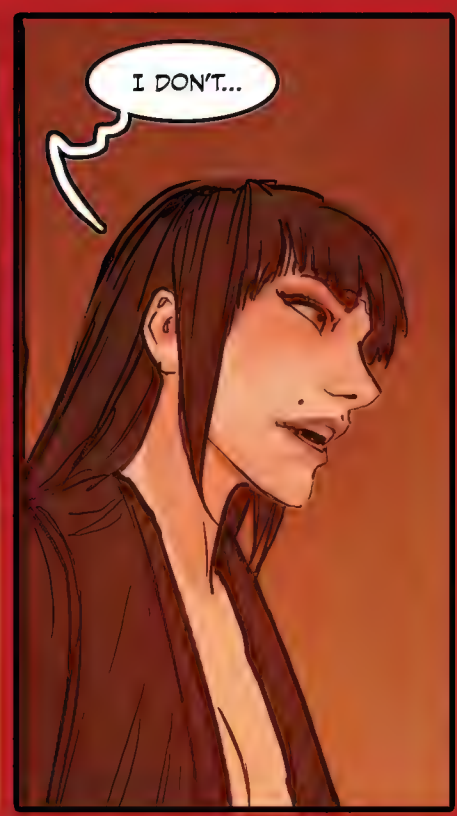
OH? NO, IT'S NOT THAT.

I JUST HAD DIFFERENT WRAPPINGS IN MIND FOR THIS TIME.

ROPES?

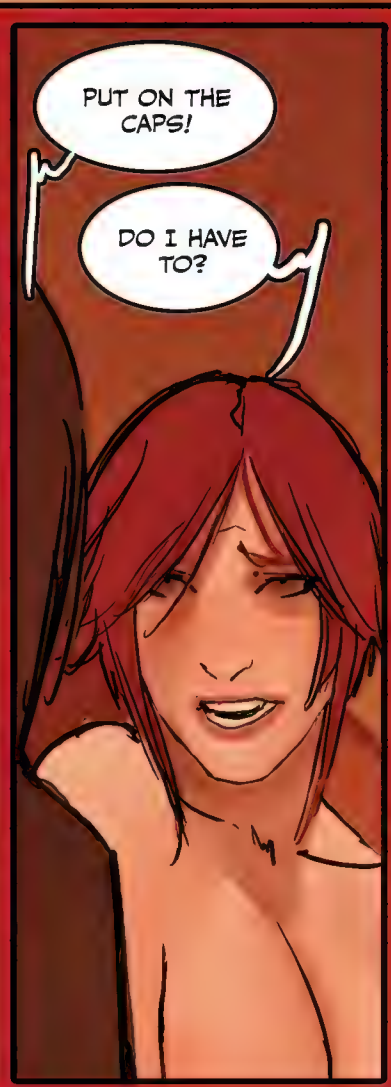
YEAH...


I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE ROPES?


I DON'T...

BUT...YOU KNOW I KINDA HOPED...
MAYBE YOU COULD CHANGE THAT.
MAYBE NEW, BETTER MEMORIES, COULD OVERWRITE OLD REGRETS.

SO...HOW ARE YOUR NIPPLES?
HEALED...ISH.


PUT ON THE CAPS!
DO I HAVE TO?

YES!

THAT EVENING WAS ONE OF THE FIVE GREATEST, MOST WONDERFUL SEXUAL EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE.

AND I ADORE EVERY MEMORY OF IT.

I LOVE REMEMBERING THE INTIMACY OF THE ENTIRE RITUAL.
REMEMBERING HER TOUCH...
THE BITE OF THE ROPES...
THEY WERE WARM MEMORIES...

A LITTLE FUZZY...

THEY WERE MEMORIES OF A SUNSET.

OUR SUNSET.

AND AFTER THE SUN SETS... WELL...

STILL DON'T LIKE ROPES?

THE PATH TO HEALING IS A LONG ONE.

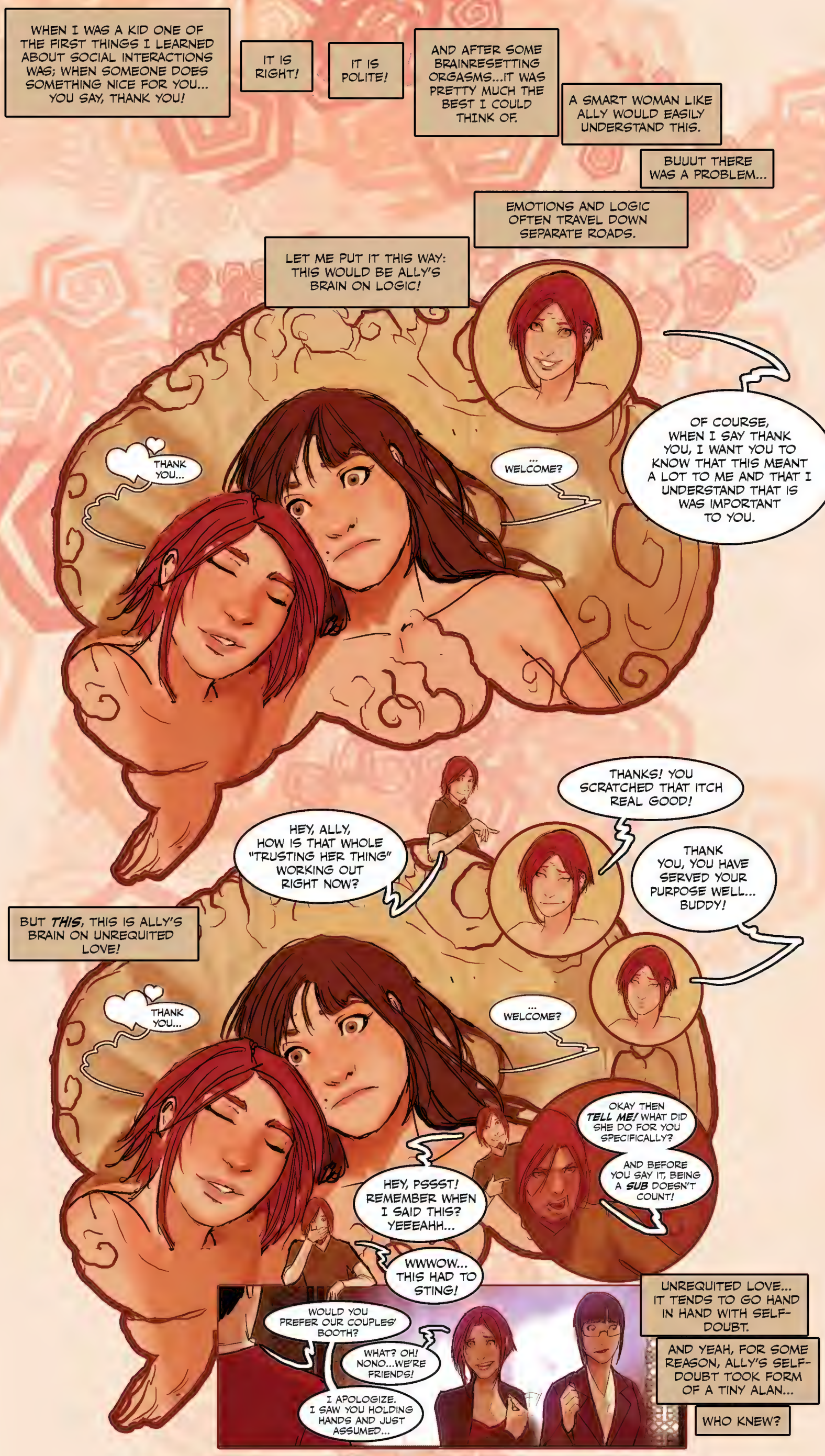
MIGHT NEED MULTIPLE SESSIONS, BUT WE MIGHT BE ONTO SOMETHING HERE.

HOW DID YOU LIKE IT?

IT WAS THE MOST WONDERFULLY SENSUAL, SEXUAL EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE...

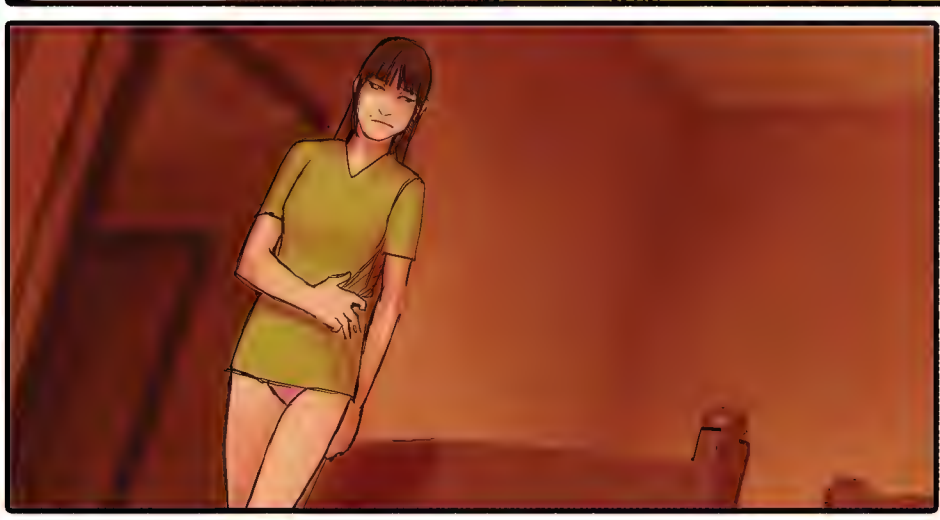
THANK YOU...

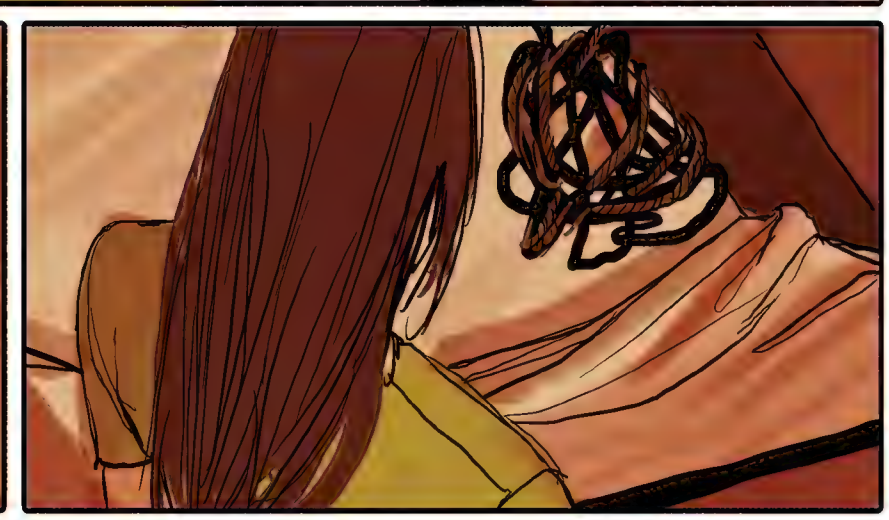
...WELCOME?

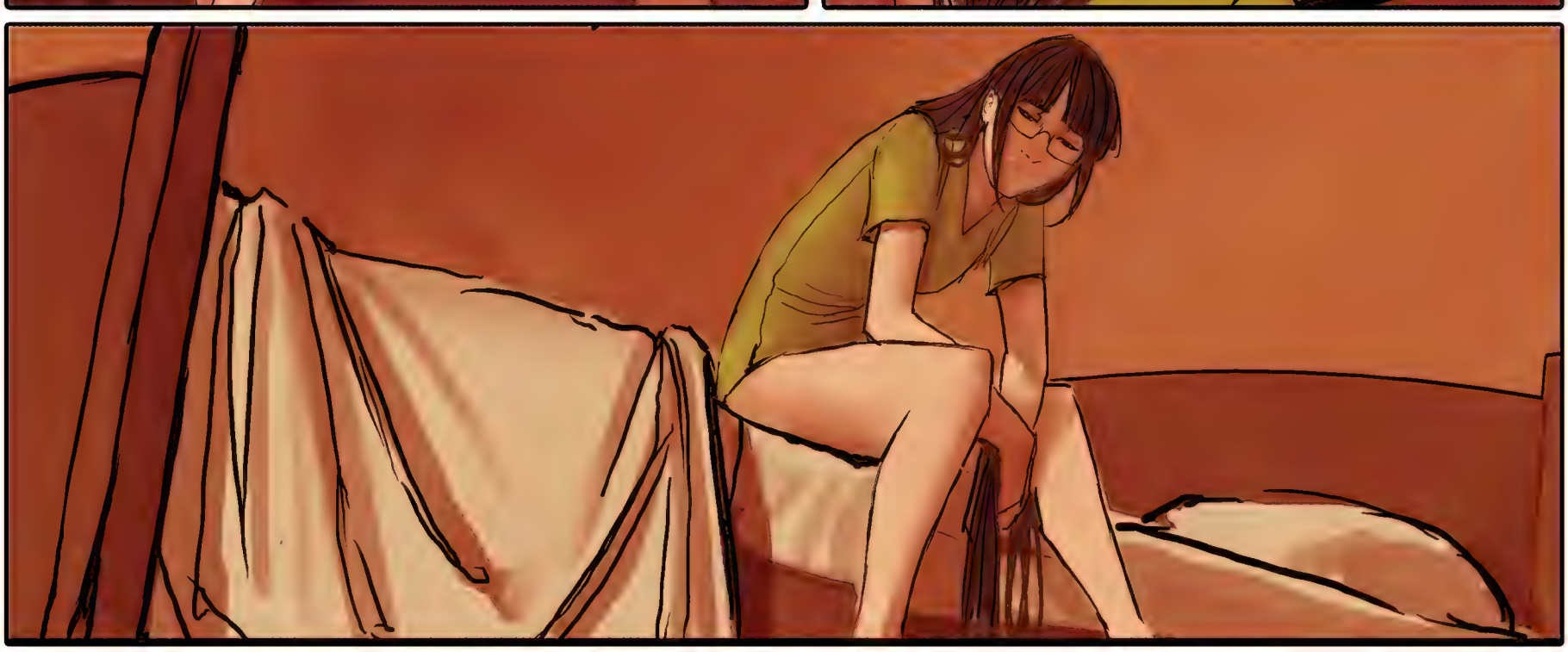

WHEN I WAS A KID ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I LEARNED ABOUT SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WAS; WHEN SOMEONE DOES SOMETHING NICE FOR YOU... YOU SAY, THANK YOU!
IT IS RIGHT!
IT IS POLITE!
AND AFTER SOME BRAINRESETTING ORGASMS...IT WAS PRETTY MUCH THE BEST I COULD THINK OF.
A SMART WOMAN LIKE ALLY WOULD EASILY UNDERSTAND THIS.
BUUUT THERE WAS A PROBLEM...
EMOTIONS AND LOGIC OFTEN TRAVEL DOWN SEPARATE ROADS.
LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY: THIS WOULD BE ALLY'S BRAIN ON LOGIC!
OF COURSE, WHEN I SAY THANK YOU, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT THIS MEANT A LOT TO ME AND THAT I UNDERSTAND THAT IS WAS IMPORTANT TO YOU.
THANK YOU...
... WELCOME?
THANKS! YOU SCRATCHED THAT ITCH REAL GOOD!
THANK YOU, YOU HAVE SERVED YOUR PURPOSE WELL... BUDDY!
HEY, ALLY, HOW IS THAT WHOLE "TRUSTING HER THING" WORKING OUT RIGHT NOW?
BUT THIS, THIS IS ALLY'S BRAIN ON UNREQUITED LOVE!
THANK YOU...
... WELCOME?
OKAY THEN TELL ME! WHAT DID SHE DO FOR YOU SPECIFICALLY?
AND BEFORE YOU SAY IT, BEING A SUB DOESN'T COUNT!
HEY, PSSST! REMEMBER WHEN I SAID THIS? YEEEAHH...
WWWOW... THIS HAD TO STING!
WOULD YOU PREFER OUR COUPLES' BOOTH?
WHAT? OH! NONO...WE'RE FRIENDS!
I APOLOGIZE. I SAW YOU HOLDING HANDS AND JUST ASSUMED...
UNREQUITED LOVE... IT TENDS TO GO HAND IN HAND WITH SELF-DOUBT.
AND YEAH, FOR SOME REASON, ALLY'S SELF-DOUBT TOOK FORM OF A TINY ALAN...
WHO KNEW?

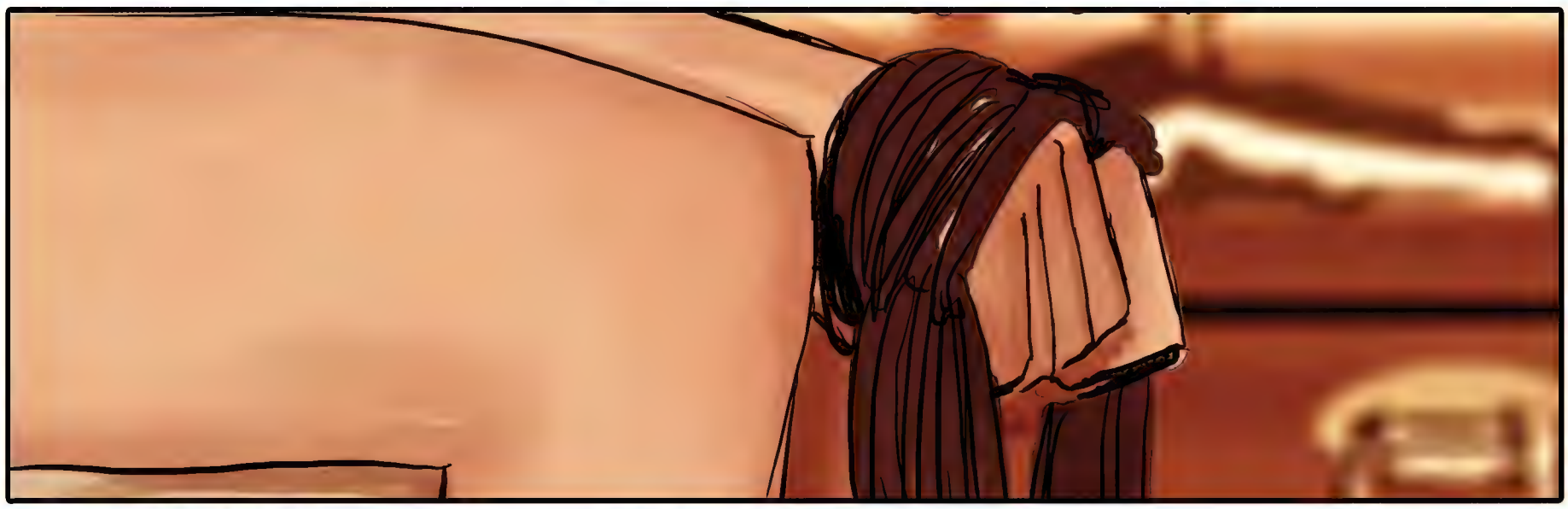
SO AAANYHOW...

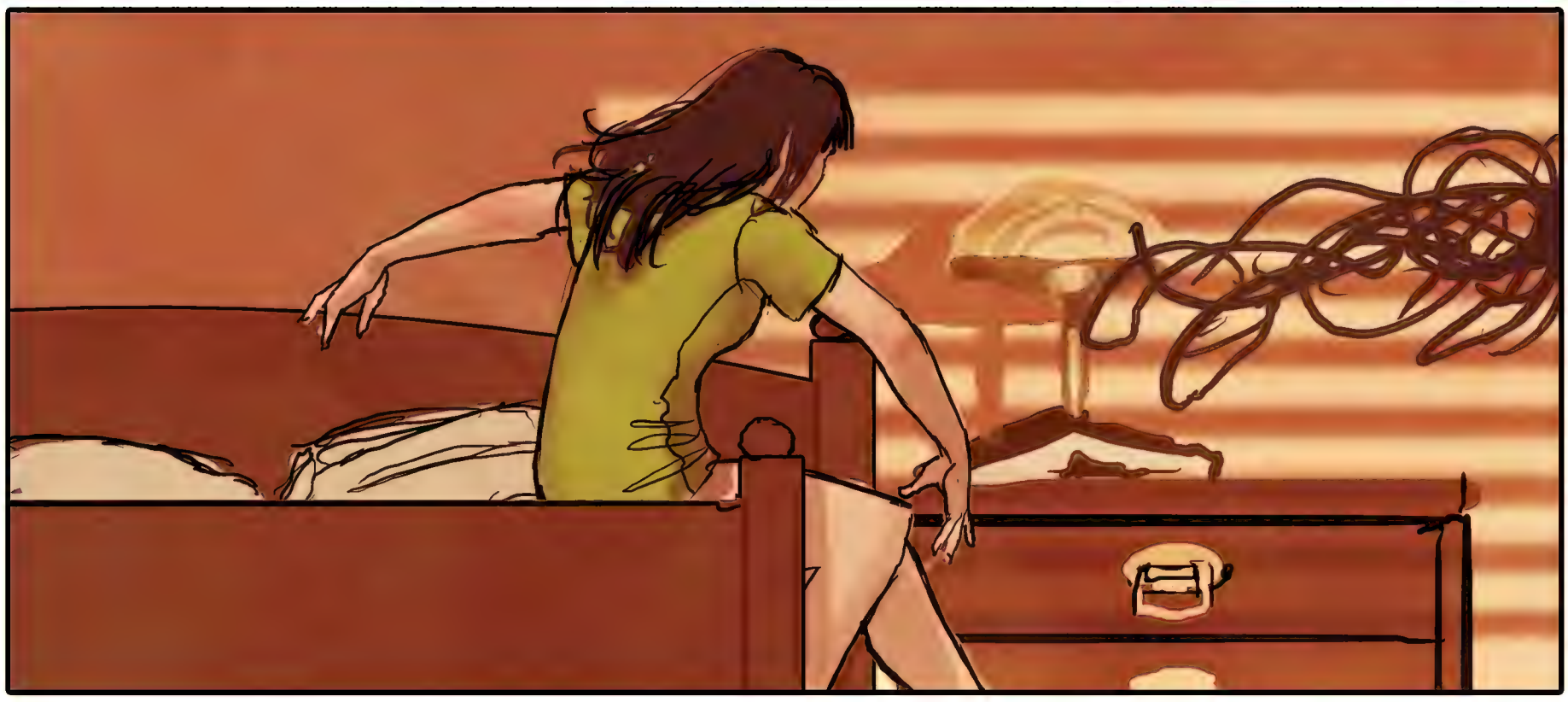
THAT SECOND BRAIN WAS RUNNING THE SHOW FROM THERE ON!



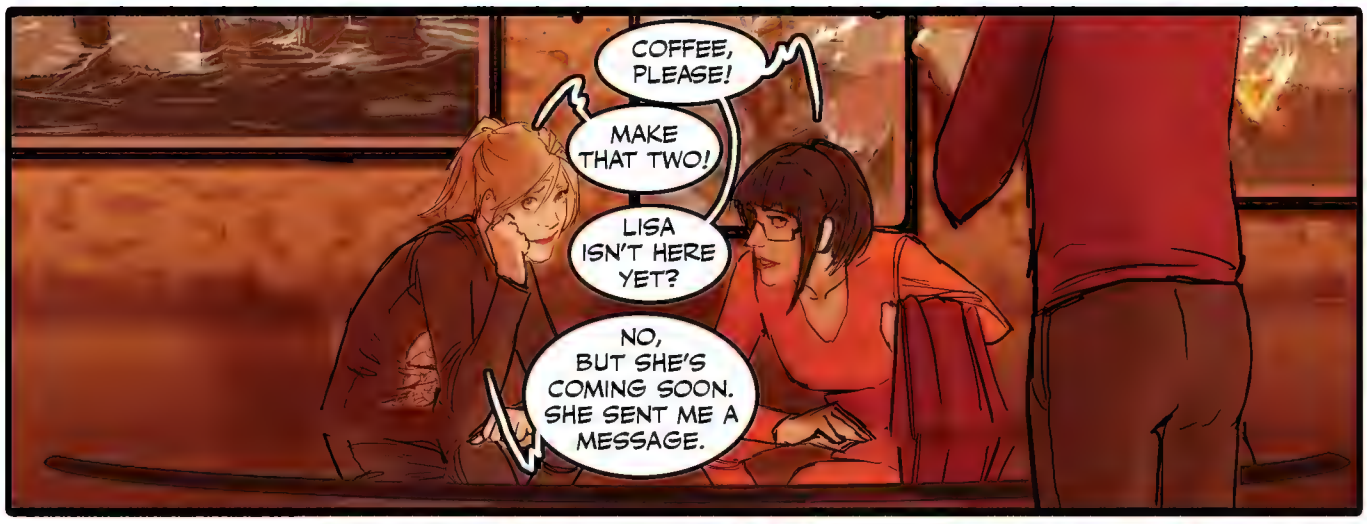








ALLY!


COFFEE, PLEASE!
MAKE THAT TWO!
LISA ISN'T HERE YET?
NO, BUT SHE'S COMING SOON. SHE SENT ME A MESSAGE.

NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MISTRESS!
OH, SO THAT'S A *THING* NOW?
MY RECENTLY QUADRUPLED SOCIAL NETWORKING CIRCLE SEEMS TO THINK SO. I BELIEVE THE WORD IS *"SHIPPING!"*
YUP! THAT'S THE INTERNET I KNOW!

DID YOU GET MUCH SHIT ABOUT THAT PIC?
NOTHING SERIOUS, YOUR AVERAGE ACCUSATIONS OF ATTENTIONWHORING, SLUTCALLING...CRAP LIKE THAT...
ON THE FLIPSIDE, I GOT ABOUT EIGHTY-PLUS MARRIAGE PROPOSALS, AND SUGGESTIONS THAT I SHOULD MARRY YOU!

SHE WAS CURIOUS, AND HONESTLY... YOU KNOW, MY OWN SIGNALS WERE SOMEWHAT MUDDYING THE WATERS.

SIGNALS, LIKE ME CONSTANTLY DOING THIS...

DON'T YOU "HEY CASSIE" ME, YOU LITTLE MINX. LOOK AT YOU HITTING ON POOR ANNE, I MIGHT JUST HAVE TO TELL YOUR GIRLFRIEND ABOUT THIS!

FRIEND!

SURE, SURE.

FRIEND!

AND YOU ARE STILL BEST FRIENDS?

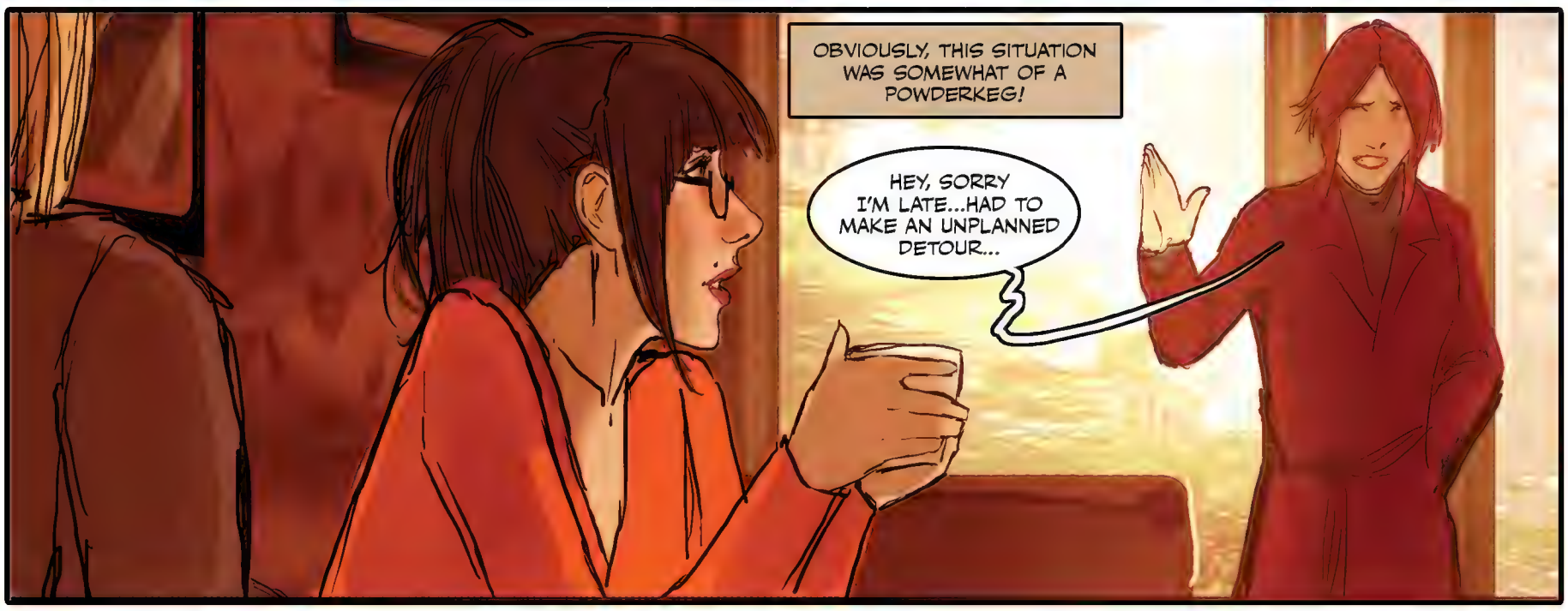
WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

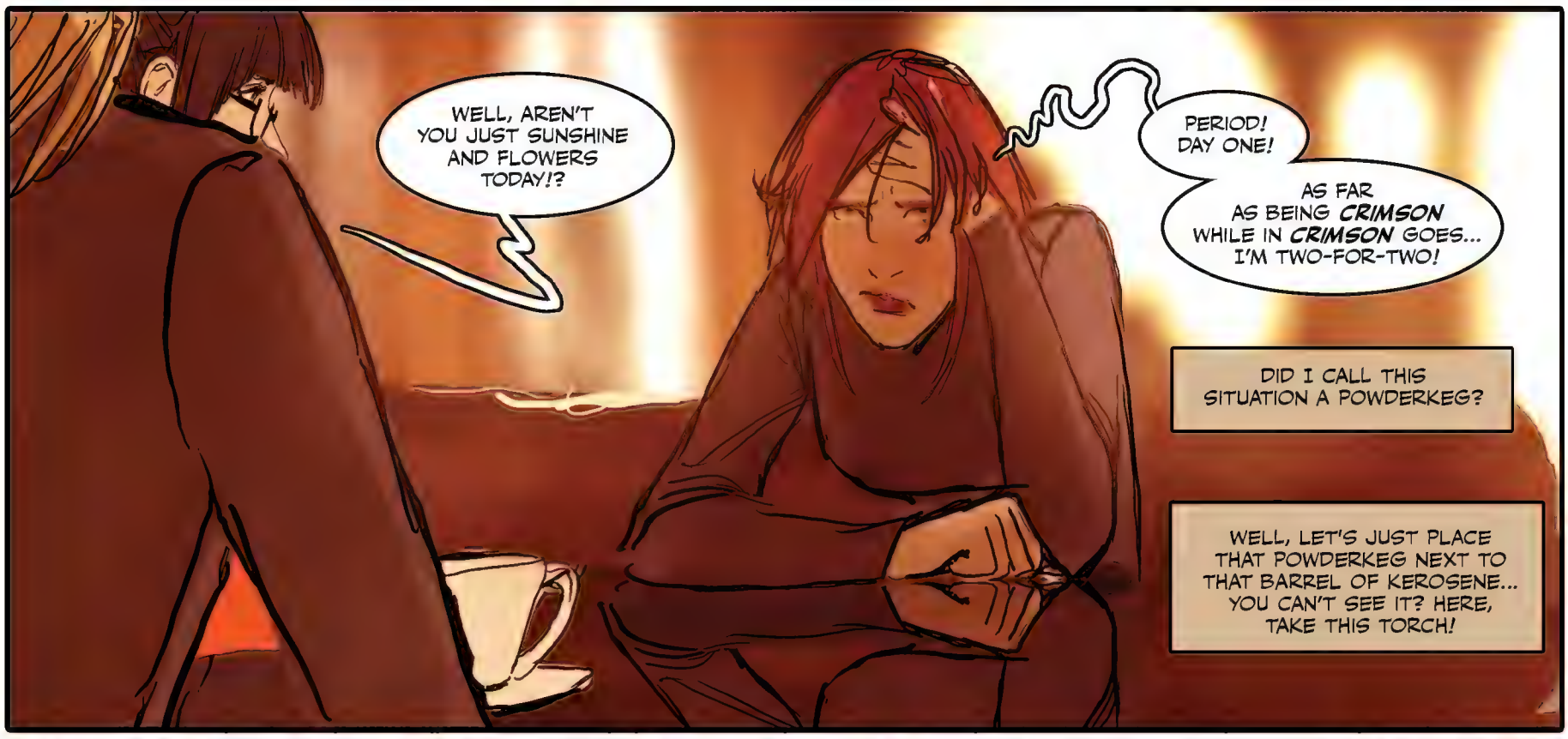
SO, YOU'RE GAY?

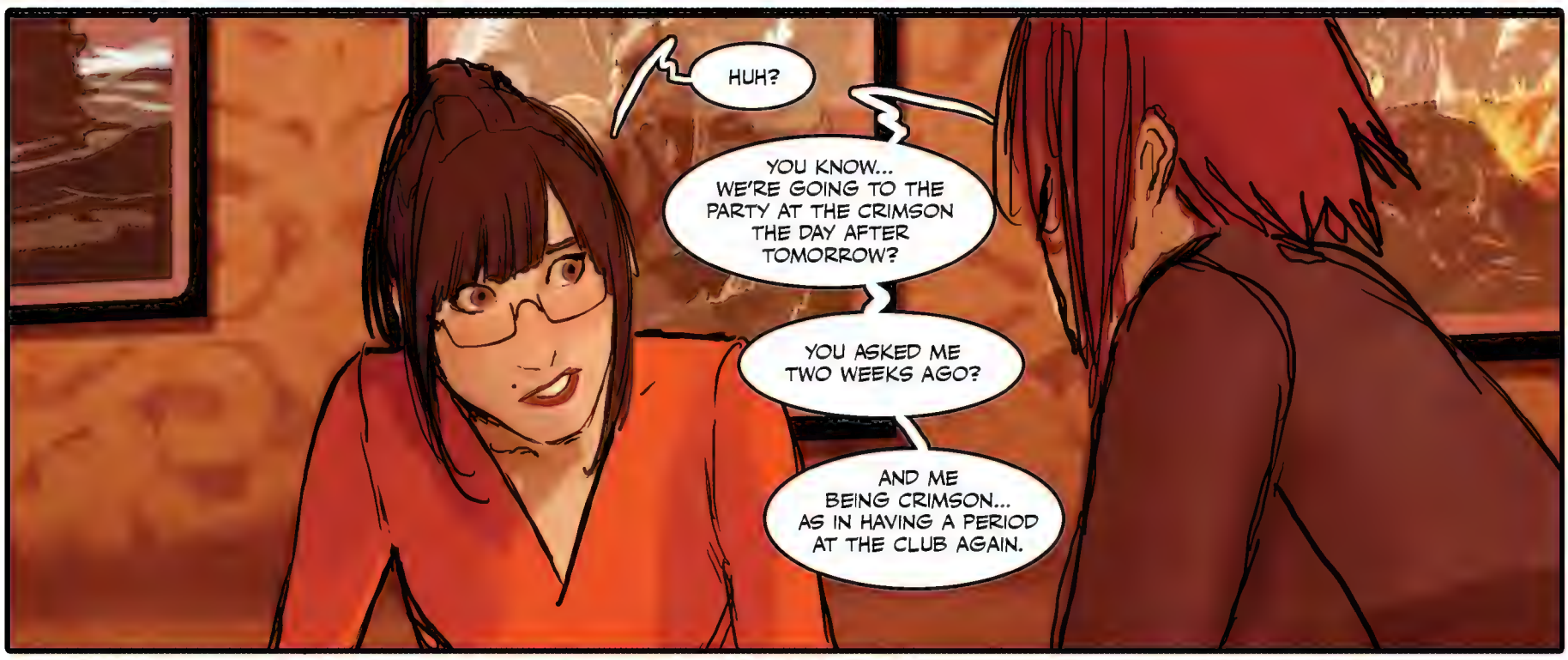
I DON'T...UM...IT'S... ALLY IS MY...BEST FRIEND THAT I HAPPEN TO...

BOINK?

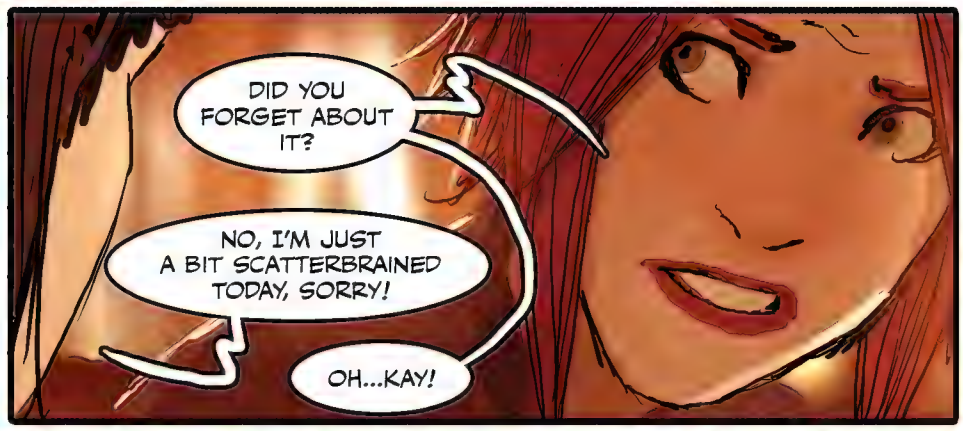
HEH...YEAH, I GUESS SO.



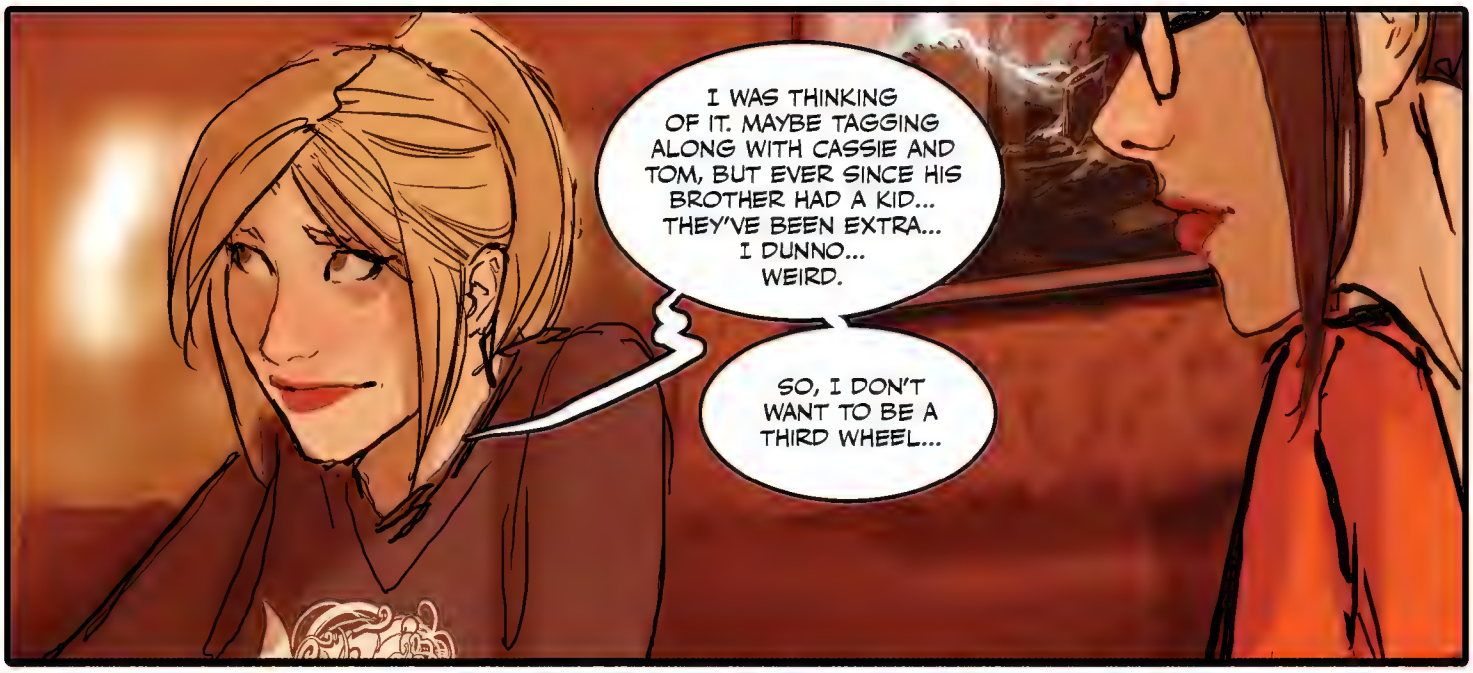

WELL, AREN'T YOU JUST SUNSHINE AND FLOWERS TODAY!?
PERIOD! DAY ONE!
AS FAR AS BEING CRIMSON WHILE IN CRIMSON GOES... I'M TWO-FOR-TWO!
DID I CALL THIS SITUATION A POWDERKEG?
WELL, LET'S JUST PLACE THAT POWDERKEG NEXT TO THAT BARREL OF KEROSENE... YOU CAN'T SEE IT? HERE, TAKE THIS TORCH!


HUH?
YOU KNOW... WE'RE GOING TO THE PARTY AT THE CRIMSON THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW?
YOU ASKED ME TWO WEEKS AGO?
AND ME BEING CRIMSON... AS IN HAVING A PERIOD AT THE CLUB AGAIN.

NO, NO, I GET IT!


DID YOU FORGET ABOUT IT?
NO, I'M JUST A BIT SCATTERBRAINED TODAY, SORRY!
OH...KAY!

SO, YOU ARE GOING TO THE HALLOWEEN PARTY?
YEAH, YOU GOING TOO?



HEY, REMEMBER THAT "LOGICAL BRAIN VERSUS BRAIN-ON-UNREQUITED-LOVE" THING?

YEEEAAHH...

HERE'S MY LOGICAL BRAIN!

UMM... YOU CAN GO WITH US...IF YOU WANT!

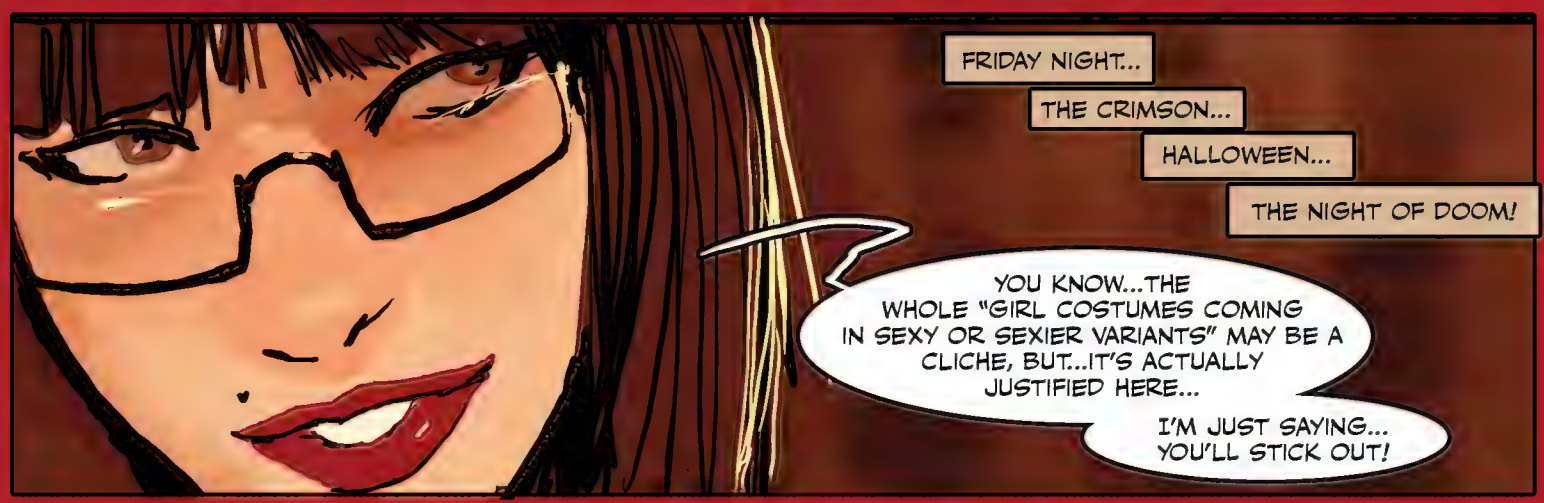
THINK ABOUT IT, LISA...YOU KINDA DRAGGED THIS GIRL INTO MY LIFE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. HELL, YOU INVITED ME HERE TODAY...I CAN'T BE RUDE!

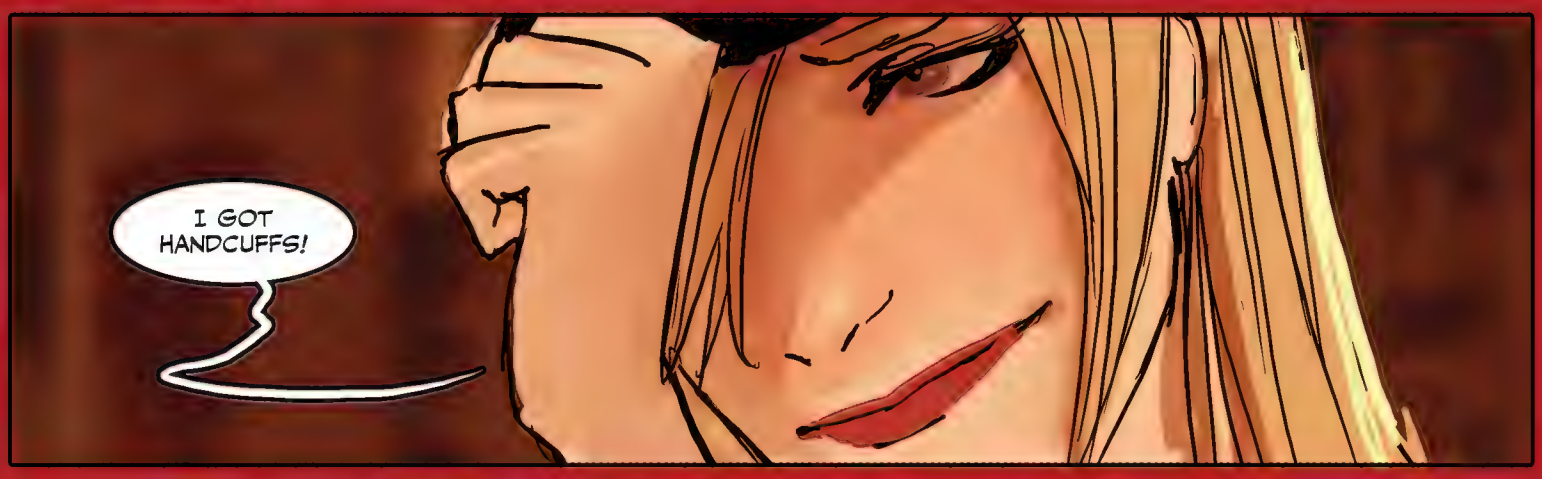
AND THEN, OF COURSE, THERE WAS MY BRAIN ON UNREQUITED LOVE:

UMM... YOU CAN GO WITH US...IF YOU WANT!

HEEEEY...YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY? THE MORE THE MERRIER, I MEAN WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR? IT'S NOT LIKE I CALLED YOU OUT FOR LIKE A DATE OR ANYTHING!

TAKE A WILD GUESS WHICH ONE WON OUT? NOW, I'LL SPARE YOU THE NEXT DAY'S MARATHON OF PETTY PASSIVE AGGRESSIONS AND CYNICISM-COATED *"THANK YOU'S"* AND JUST SKIP TO THE MAIN EVENT!





AND I GOT A JUSTICE STICK!

TRUST ME, I'LL BLEND IN JUST FINE!

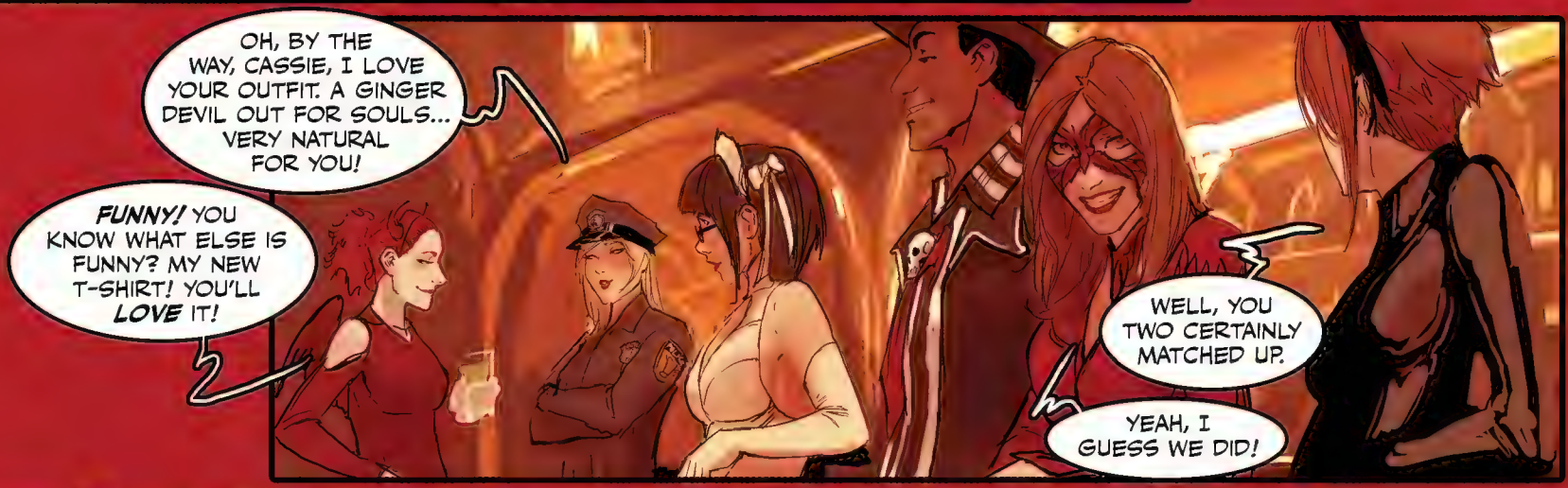
WHATEVER YOU SAY, OFFICER!

HEH, ALRIGHT, LADIES! LET'S DO THIS!

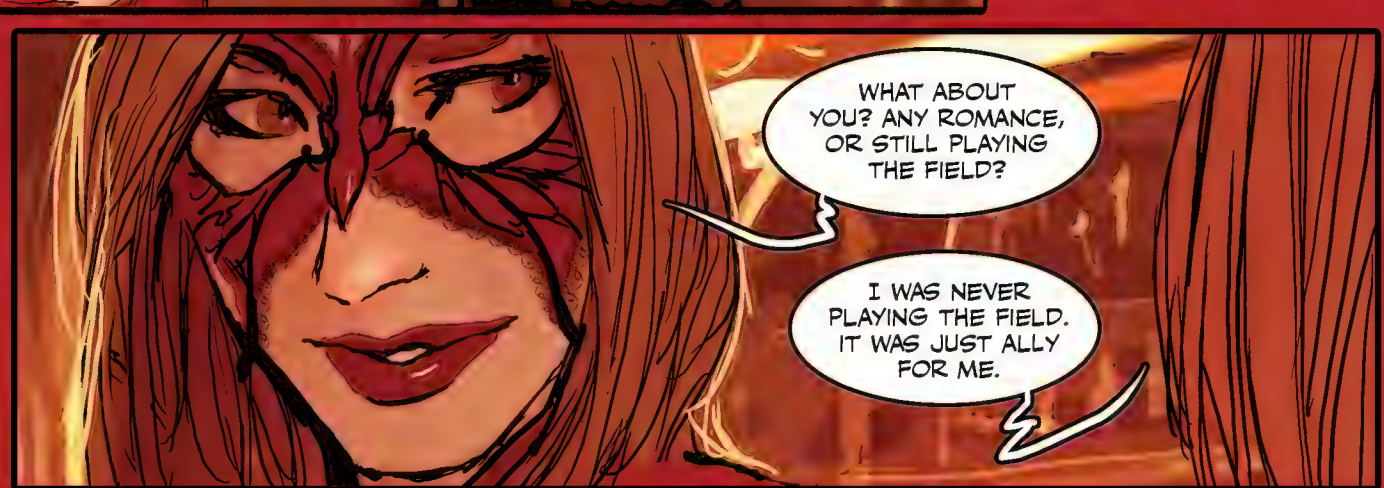
YEAH...LET'S!

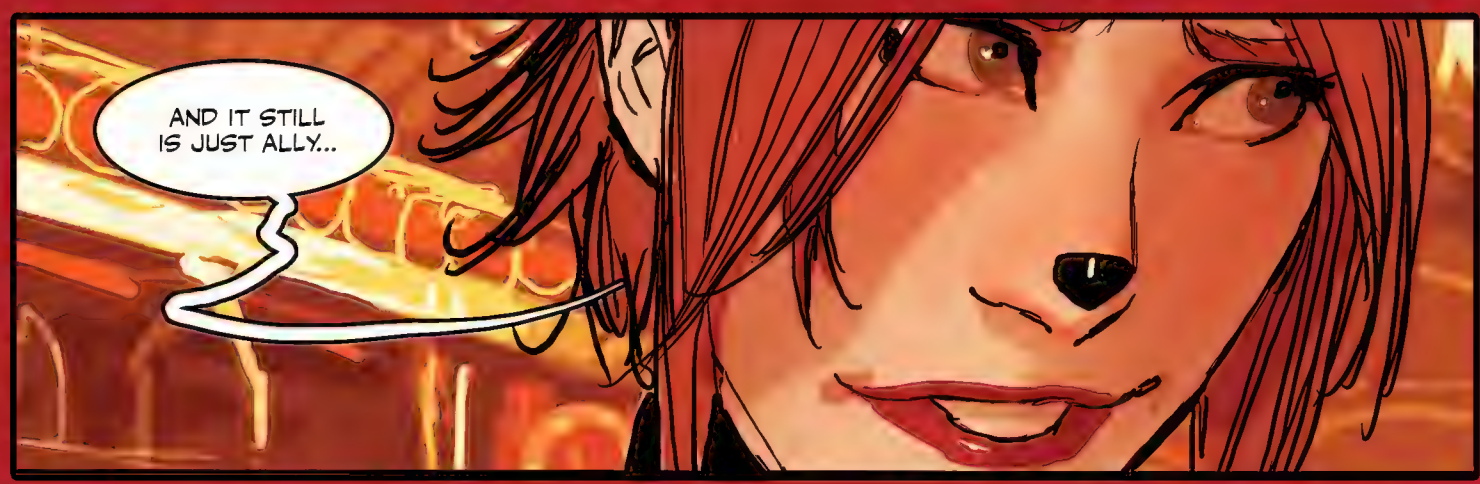
SO, IT TURNS OUT THAT EVENING WAS MORE THAN JUST A HALLOWEEN PARTY NIGHT AT THE CRIMSON. IT ENDED UP BEING A SMALL ENGAGEMENT PARTY AS WELL.
BIG NIGHT FOR A LOT OF US IT SEEMS.

SO, YOU GUYS GONNA DO A BONDAGE-THEMED WEDDING?
HELL NO! I DON'T THINK THAT WOULD GO OVER GREAT WITH OUR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.
WELL... FRIENDS WOULD PROBABLY BE OKAY WITH IT, BUT GRANNY LORRAINE WOULD FREAK OUT!


OH, BY THE WAY, CASSIE, I LOVE YOUR OUTFIT. A GINGER DEVIL OUT FOR SOULS... VERY NATURAL FOR YOU!
FUNNY! YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE IS FUNNY? MY NEW T-SHIRT! YOU'LL LOVE IT!
WELL, YOU TWO CERTAINLY MATCHED UP.
YEAH, I GUESS WE DID!

SO, DID HE LIKE, TIE YOU UP BEFORE POPPING THE QUESTION?
YOU HAVE A VERY VIVID IMAGINATION!
I'M A WRITER...
HEH...


WHAT ABOUT YOU? ANY ROMANCE, OR STILL PLAYING THE FIELD?
I WAS NEVER PLAYING THE FIELD. IT WAS JUST ALLY FOR ME.



YOU KNOW THAT WEIRD SLOW MOTION SOUND?

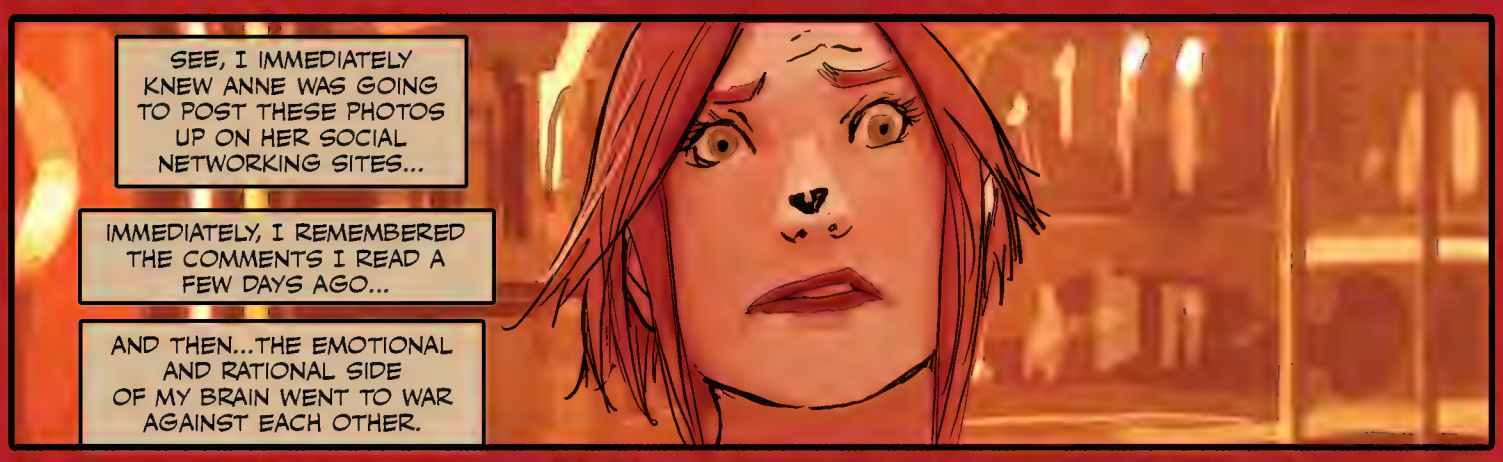
I SWEAR I COULD HEAR MY STOMACH MAKING IT.

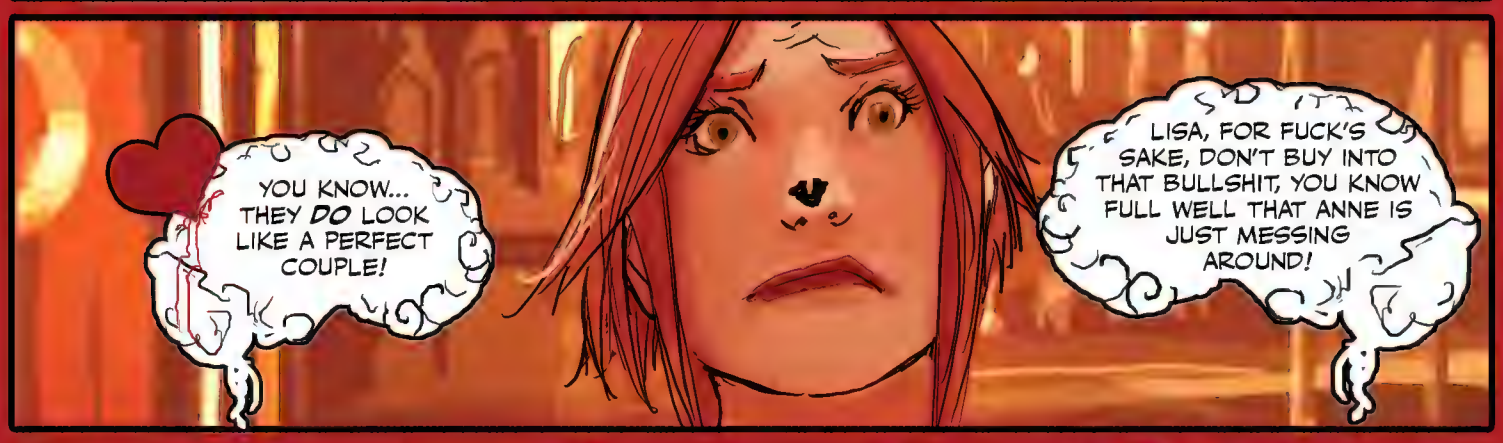
SOUNDS KINDA LIKE: PWOOOOOOOOOM...

SOOO, ARE WE DONE HERE OFFICER?

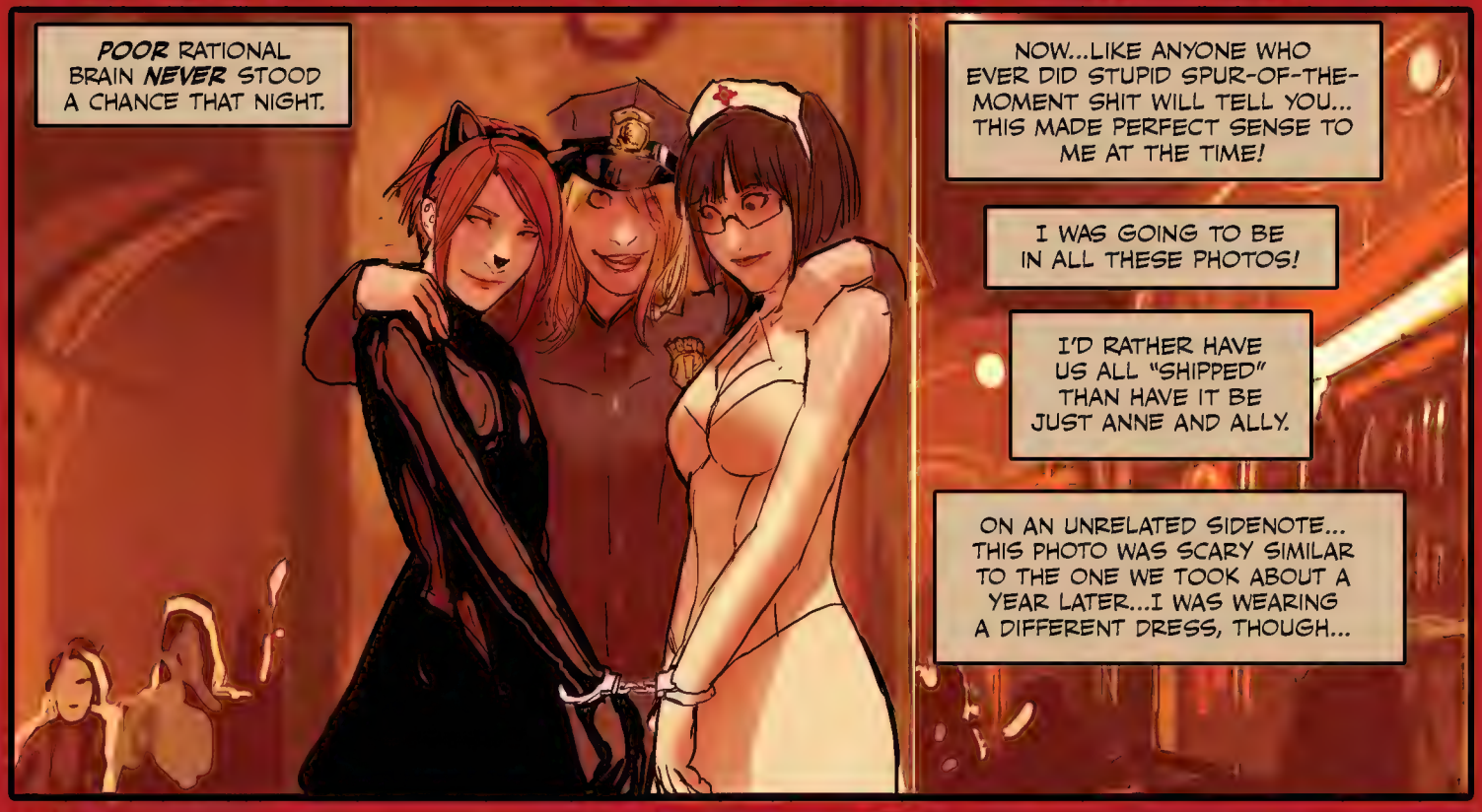
MA'AM, ARE YOU RESISTING ARREST?

AND WHAT IF I AM?

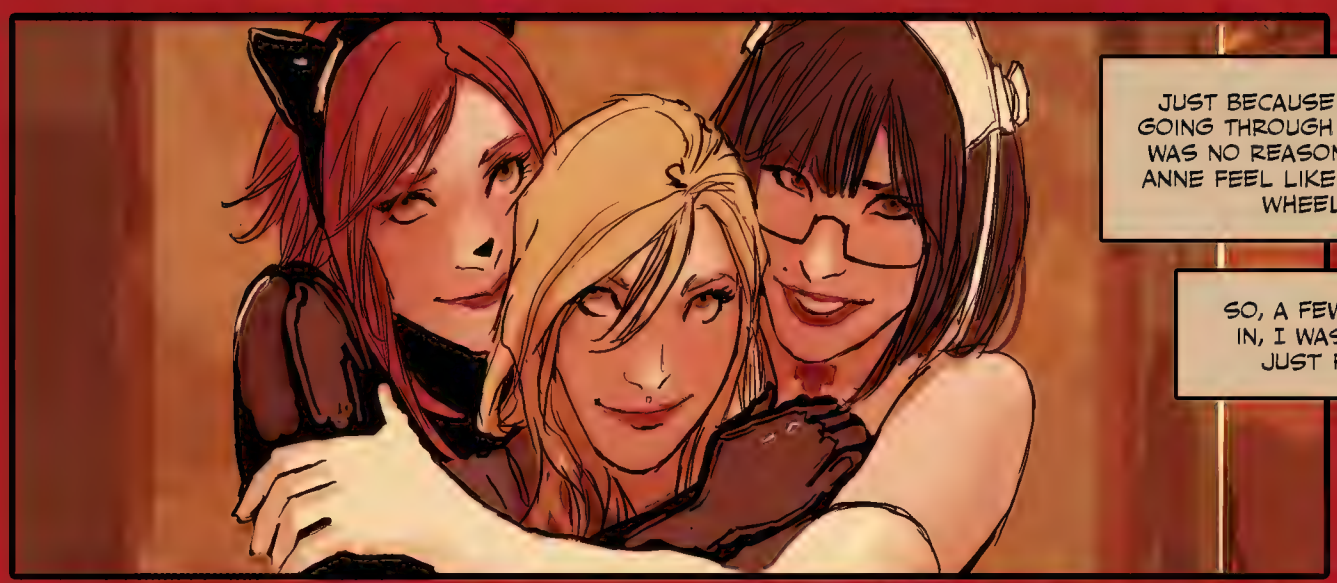

SEE, I IMMEDIATELY KNEW ANNE WAS GOING TO POST THESE PHOTOS UP ON HER SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES...
IMMEDIATELY, I REMEMBERED THE COMMENTS I READ A FEW DAYS AGO...
AND THEN...THE EMOTIONAL AND RATIONAL SIDE OF MY BRAIN WENT TO WAR AGAINST EACH OTHER.


YOU KNOW... THEY DO LOOK LIKE A PERFECT COUPLE!
LISA, FOR FUCK'S SAKE, DON'T BUY INTO THAT BULLSHIT, YOU KNOW FULL WELL THAT ANNE IS JUST MESSING AROUND!

IT WAS...A SHORT WAR. EMOTIONAL SIDE OPTED FOR THE NUCLEAR OPTION.
CHUG! CHUG! CHUG!
BONK
BONK
YEAH, NO... FUCK IT! YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!

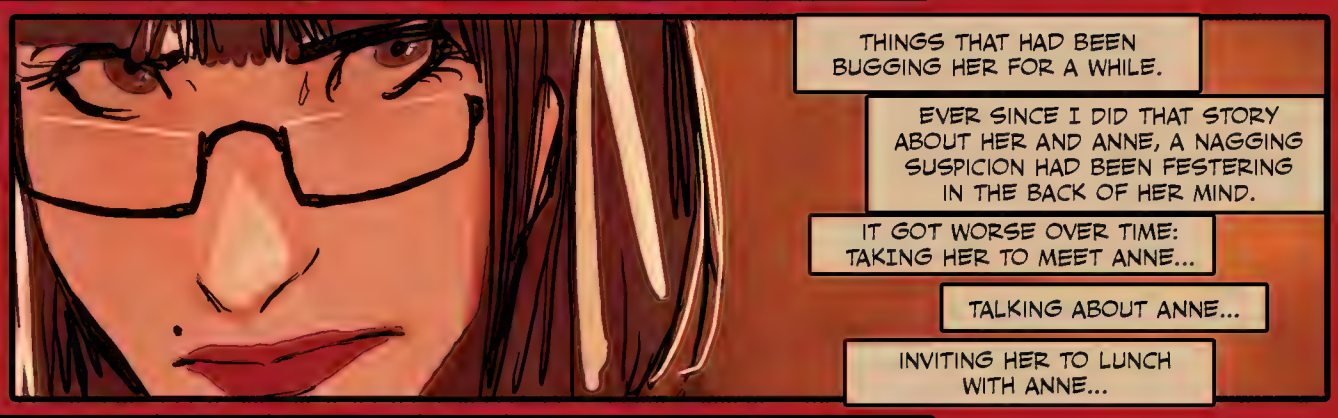

POOR RATIONAL BRAIN NEVER STOOD A CHANCE THAT NIGHT.
NOW...LIKE ANYONE WHO EVER DID STUPID SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT SHIT WILL TELL YOU... THIS MADE PERFECT SENSE TO ME AT THE TIME!
I WAS GOING TO BE IN ALL THESE PHOTOS!
I'D RATHER HAVE US ALL "SHIPPED" THAN HAVE IT BE JUST ANNE AND ALLY.
ON AN UNRELATED SIDENOTE... THIS PHOTO WAS SCARY SIMILAR TO THE ONE WE TOOK ABOUT A YEAR LATER...I WAS WEARING A DIFFERENT DRESS, THOUGH...

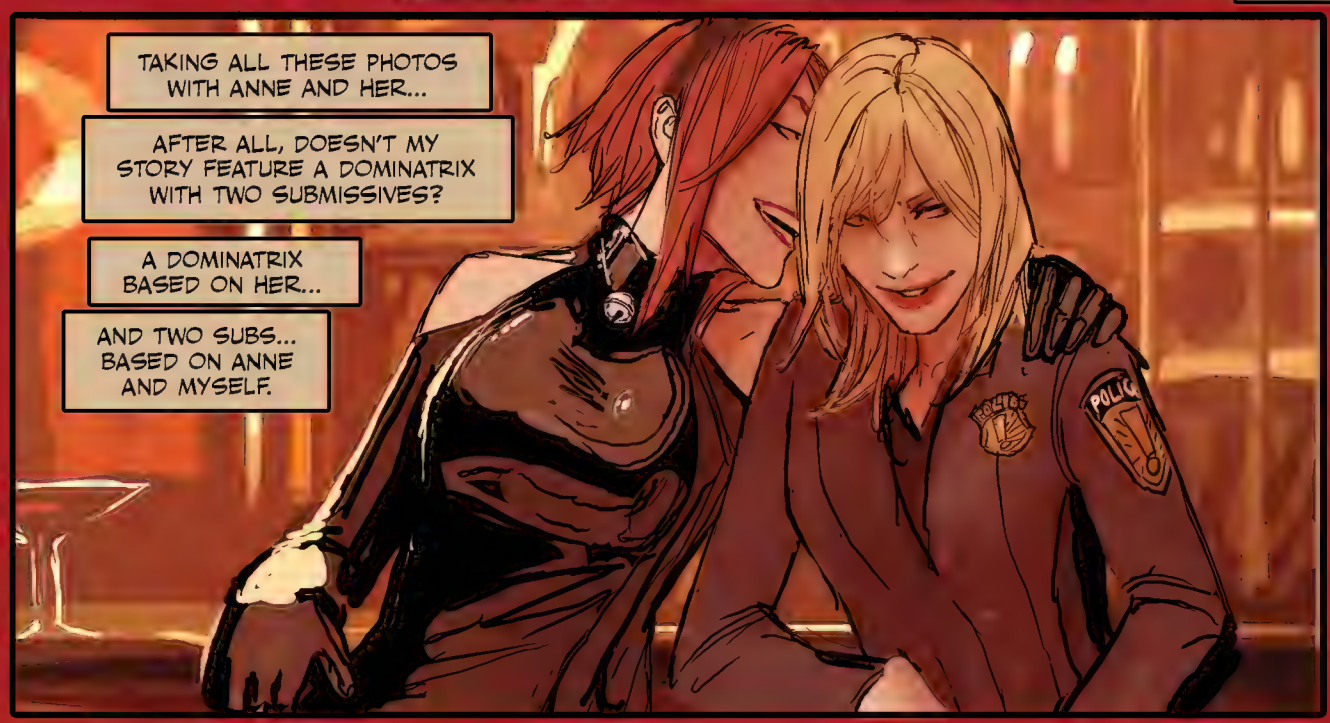
I GOTTA ADMIT, ANNE'S SPIRIT WAS INFECTIOUS... SHE WAS HAVING A BLAST, AND SO I, TOO, RELAXED.

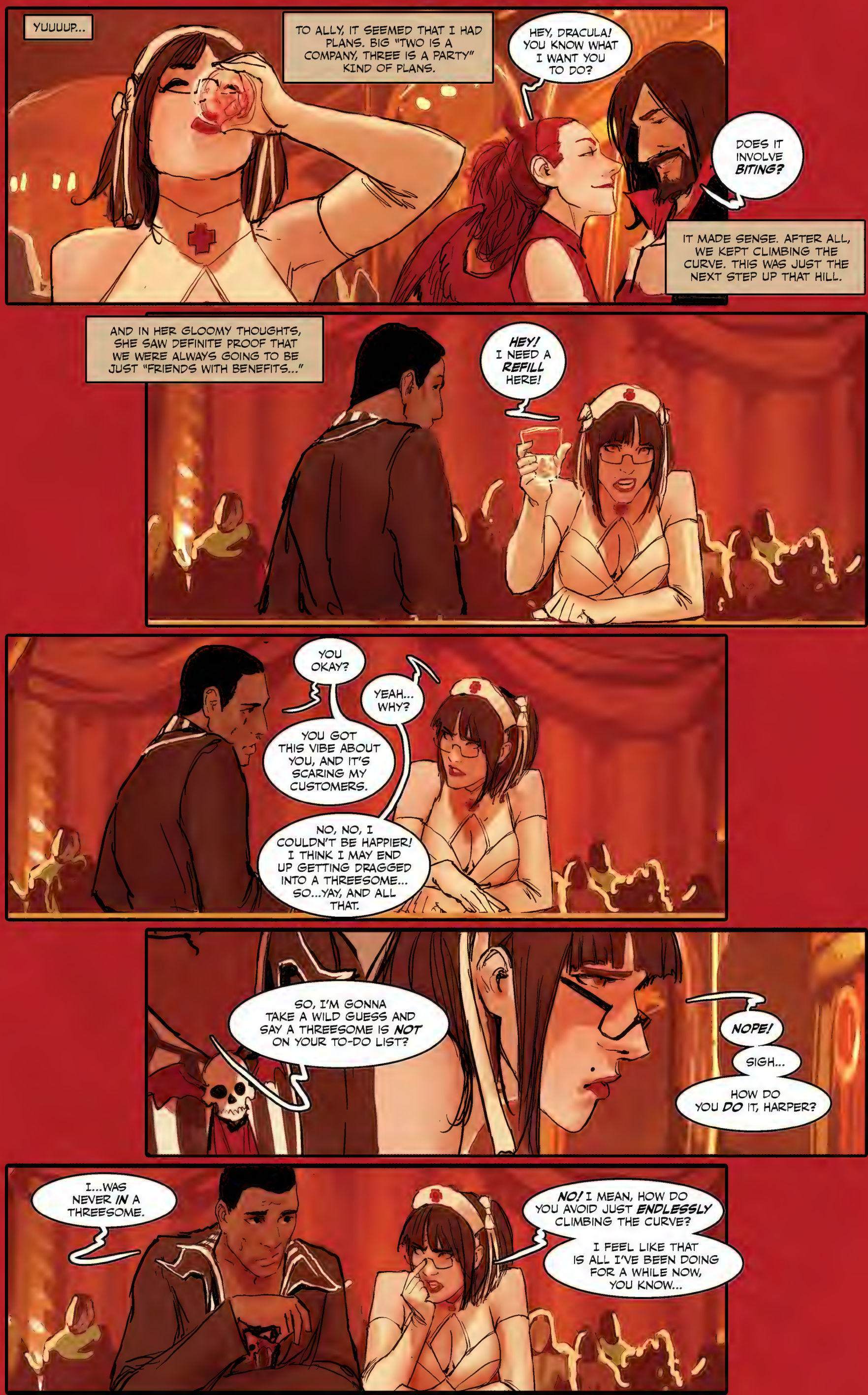

JUST BECAUSE WE WERE GOING THROUGH SOME SHIT, WAS NO REASON TO MAKE ANNE FEEL LIKE THE THIRD WHEEL.
SO, A FEW DRINKS IN, I WAS DOING JUST FINE...

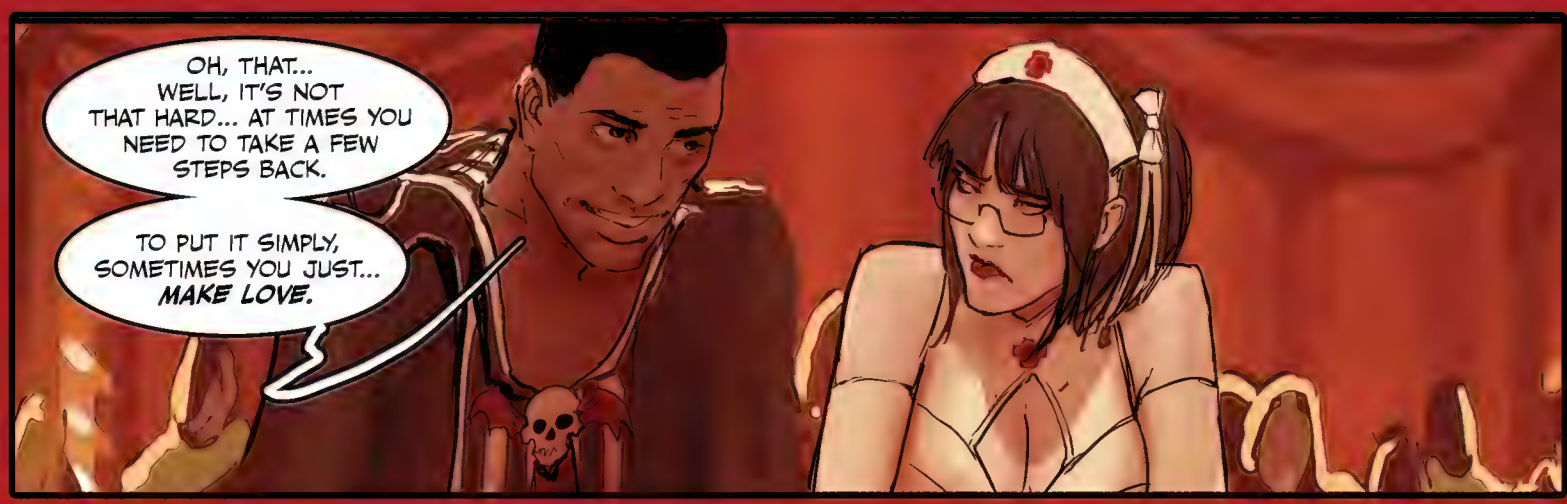
HERE YOU GO. ONE VODKA CRANBERRY!
THANKS!
BUT ALLY...

ALLY STARTED NOTICING THINGS...


THINGS THAT HAD BEEN BUGGING HER FOR A WHILE.
EVER SINCE I DID THAT STORY ABOUT HER AND ANNE, A NAGGING SUSPICION HAD BEEN FESTERING IN THE BACK OF HER MIND.
IT GOT WORSE OVER TIME: TAKING HER TO MEET ANNE...
TALKING ABOUT ANNE...
INVITING HER TO LUNCH WITH ANNE...

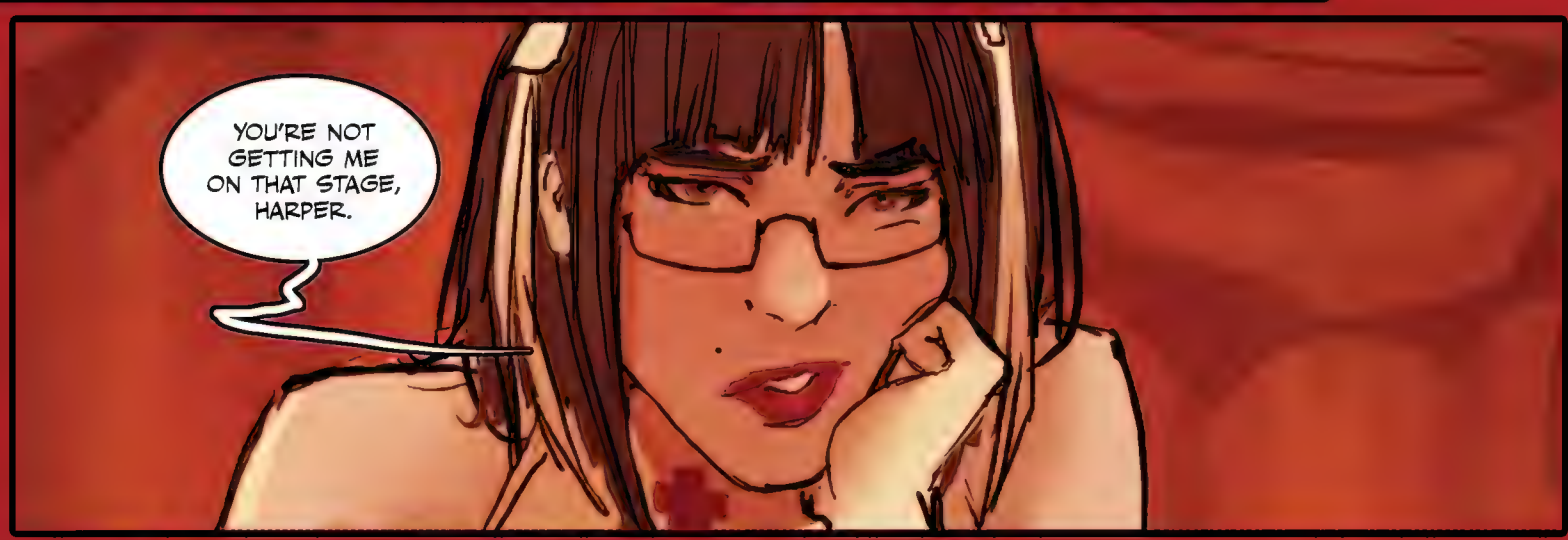

TAKING ALL THESE PHOTOS WITH ANNE AND HER...
AFTER ALL, DOESN'T MY STORY FEATURE A DOMINATRIX WITH TWO SUBMISSIVES?
A DOMINATRIX BASED ON HER...
AND TWO SUBS... BASED ON ANNE AND MYSELF.

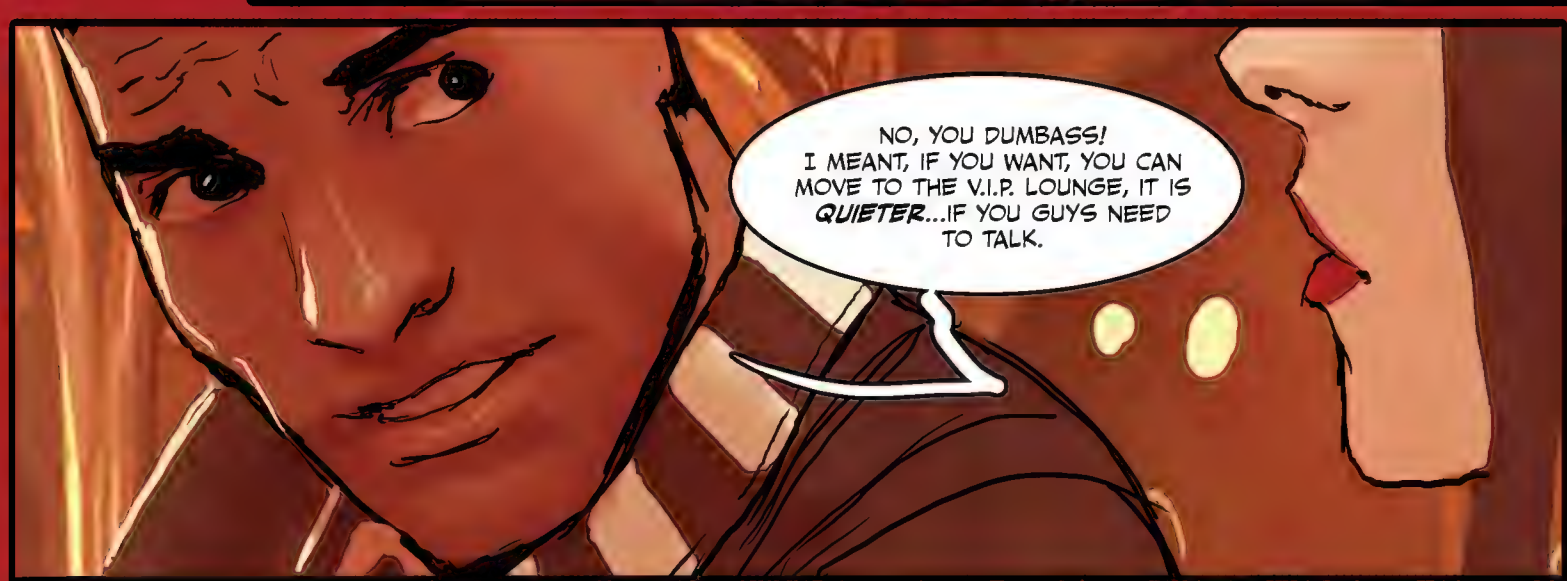

YUUUUP...
TO ALLY, IT SEEMED THAT I HAD PLANS. BIG "TWO IS A COMPANY, THREE IS A PARTY" KIND OF PLANS.
HEY, DRACULA! YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO?
DOES IT INVOLVE BITING?
IT MADE SENSE. AFTER ALL, WE KEPT CLIMBING THE CURVE. THIS WAS JUST THE NEXT STEP UP THAT HILL.
AND IN HER GLOOMY THOUGHTS, SHE SAW DEFINITE PROOF THAT WE WERE ALWAYS GOING TO BE JUST "FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS..."
HEY! I NEED A REFILL HERE!
YOU OKAY?
YEAH... WHY?
YOU GOT THIS VIBE ABOUT YOU, AND IT'S SCARING MY CUSTOMERS.
NO, NO, I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER! I THINK I MAY END UP GETTING DRAGGED INTO A THREESOME... SO...YAY, AND ALL THAT.
SO, I'M GONNA TAKE A WILD GUESS AND SAY A THREESOME IS NOT ON YOUR TO-DO LIST?
NOPE!
SIGH...
HOW DO YOU DO IT, HARPER?
I...WAS NEVER IN A THREESOME.
NO! I MEAN, HOW DO YOU AVOID JUST ENDLESSLY CLIMBING THE CURVE?
I FEEL LIKE THAT IS ALL I'VE BEEN DOING FOR A WHILE NOW, YOU KNOW...

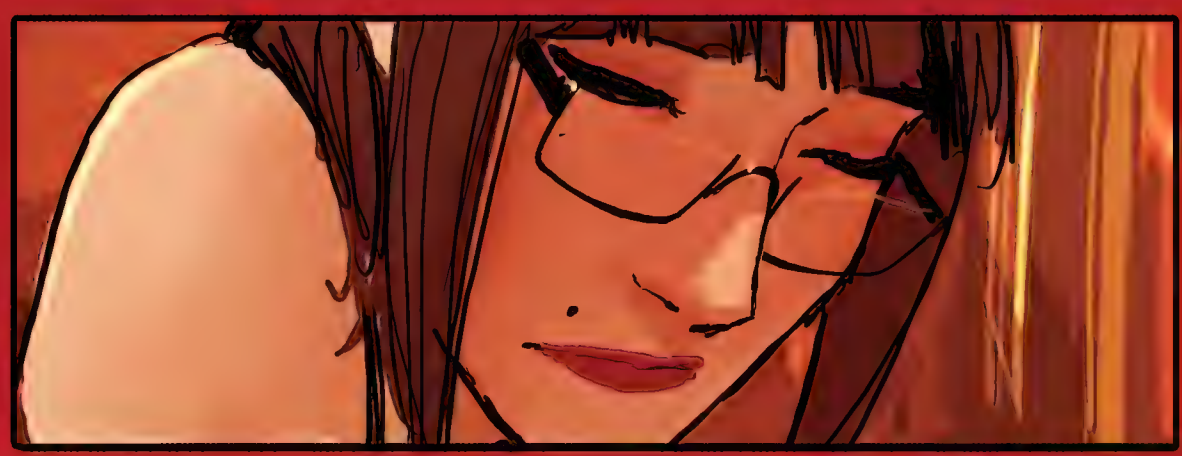

OH, THAT... WELL, IT'S NOT THAT HARD... AT TIMES YOU NEED TO TAKE A FEW STEPS BACK.
TO PUT IT SIMPLY, SOMETIMES YOU JUST... MAKE LOVE.

"SOMETIMES YOU JUST MAKE LOVE..." RUB IT IN, WHY DON'T YOU!?

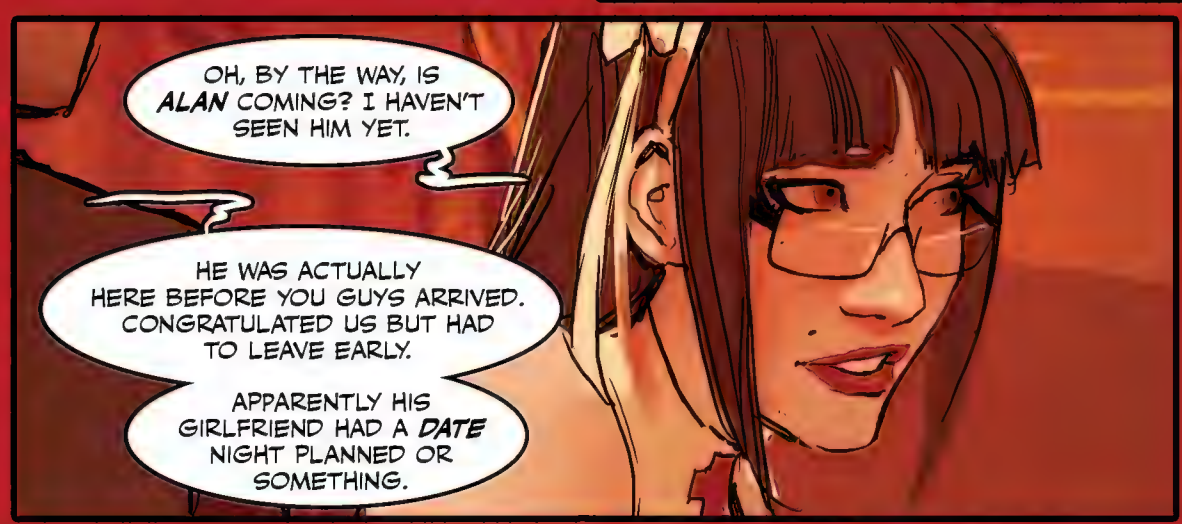
THIS ABOUT LISA?
MAYBE...
LISTEN, WE WILL HAVE SOME PERFORMANCES SOON, AND...

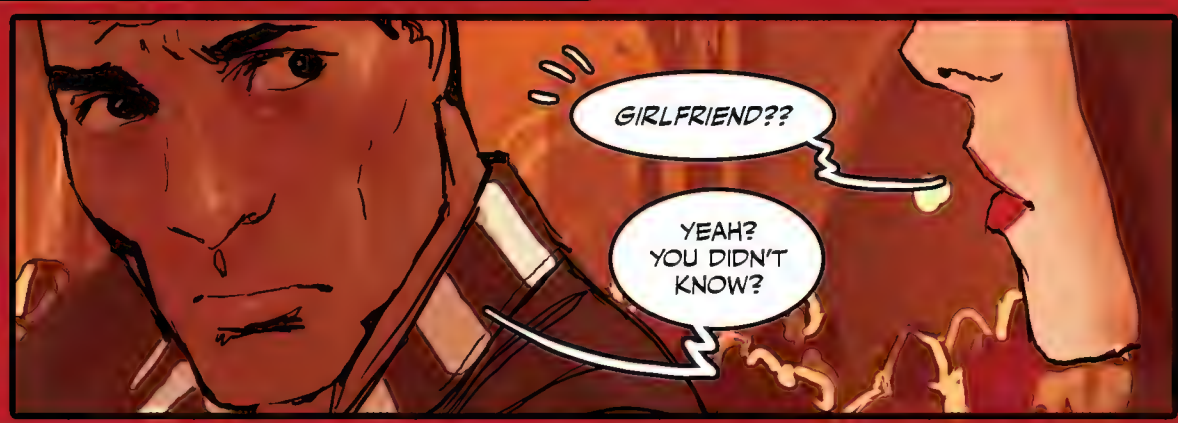

YOU'RE NOT GETTING ME ON THAT STAGE, HARPER.


NO, YOU DUMBASS! I MEANT, IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN MOVE TO THE V.I.P. LOUNGE, IT IS QUIETER...IF YOU GUYS NEED TO TALK.



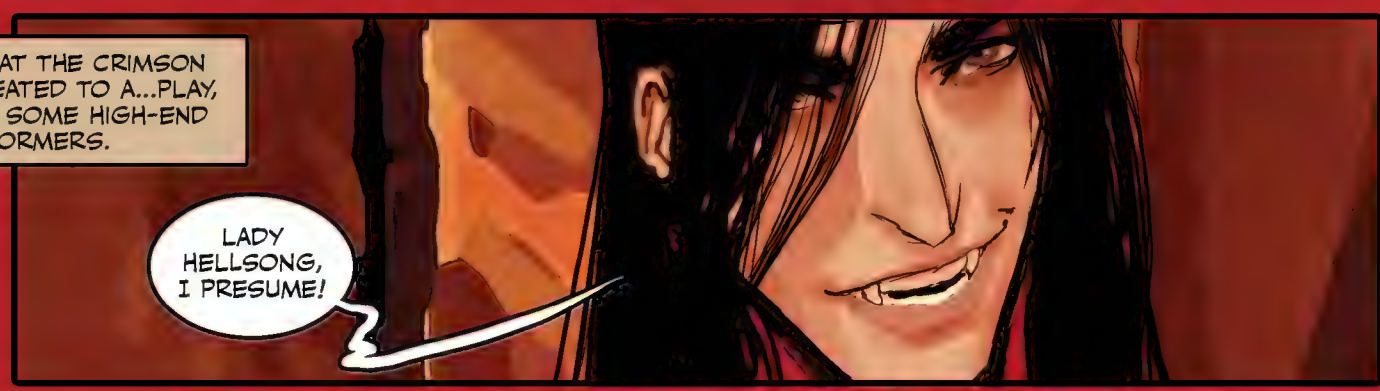
THANKS, HARPER.


OH, BY THE WAY, IS *ALAN* COMING? I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM YET.
HE WAS ACTUALLY HERE BEFORE YOU GUYS ARRIVED. CONGRATULATED US BUT HAD TO LEAVE EARLY.
APPARENTLY HIS GIRLFRIEND HAD A *DATE* NIGHT PLANNED OR SOMETHING.


GIRLFRIEND??
YEAH? YOU DIDN'T KNOW?

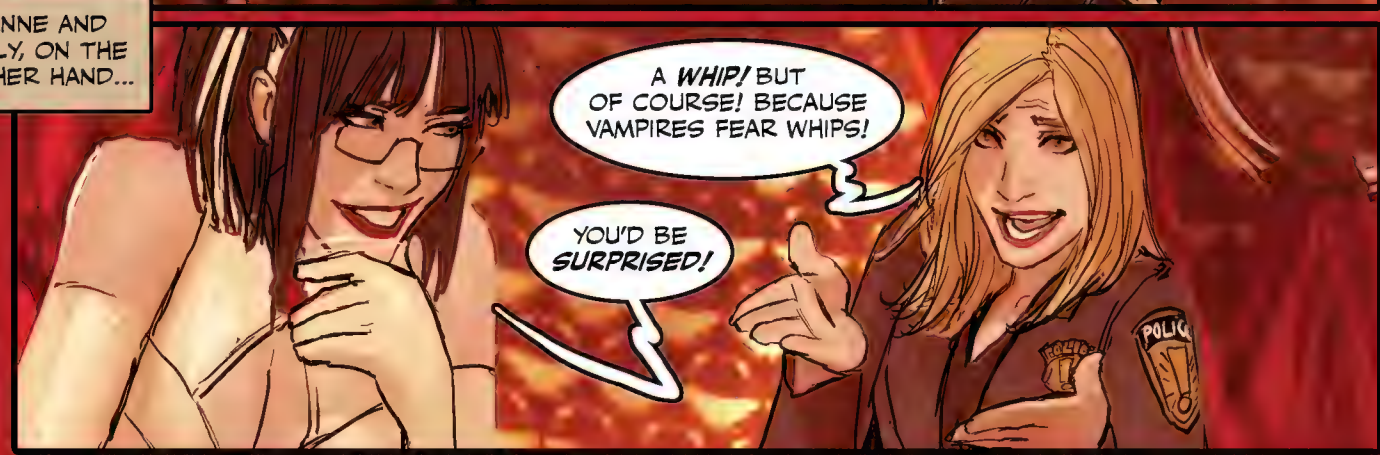
NO...I... I HAVEN'T REALLY TALKED TO HIM IN A WHILE NOW.

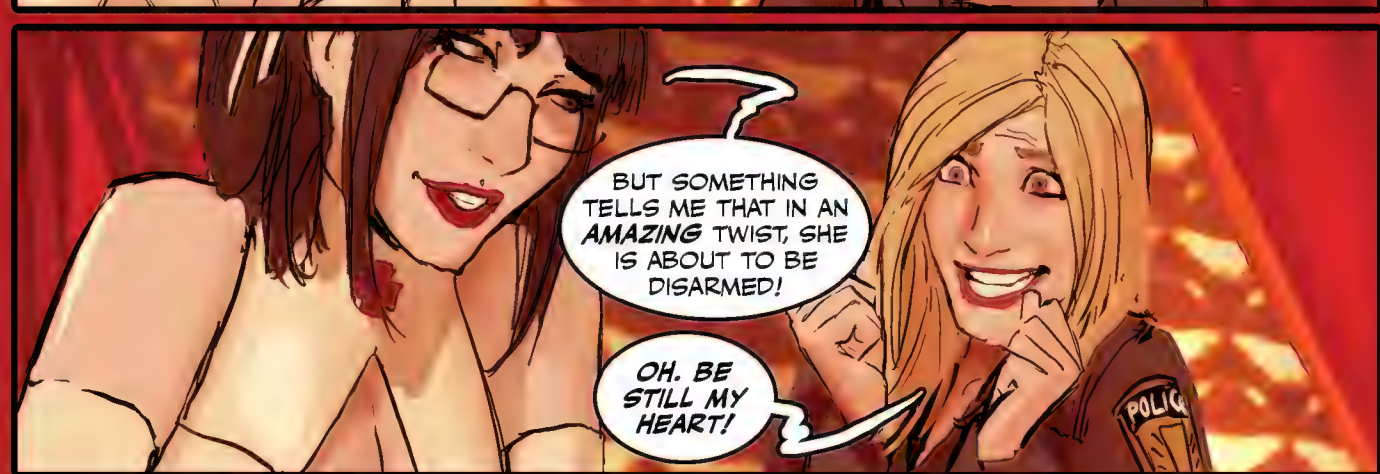
RIGHT! THE ALAN THING... WE'LL GET TO THAT ONE.
BUT NOT JUST YET...

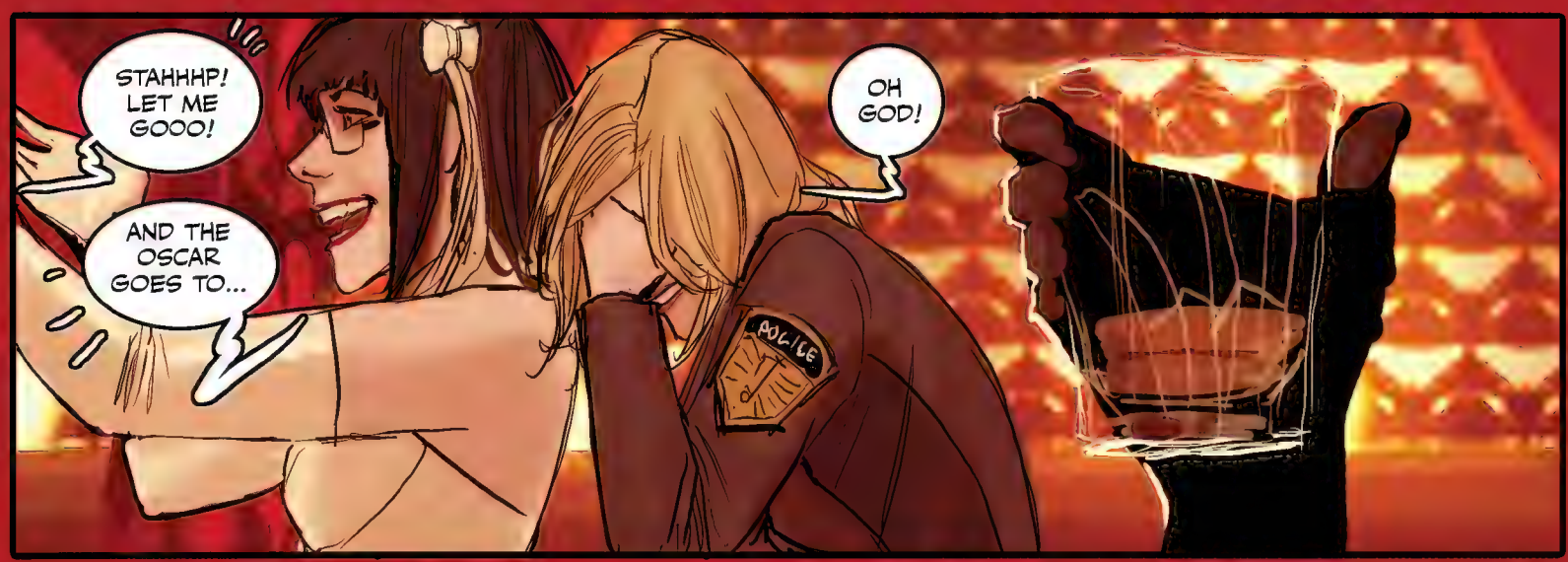

MEANWHILE, AT THE CRIMSON WE WERE TREATED TO A...PLAY, I GUESS, BY SOME HIGH-END PERFORMERS.
LADY HELLSONG, I PRESUME!

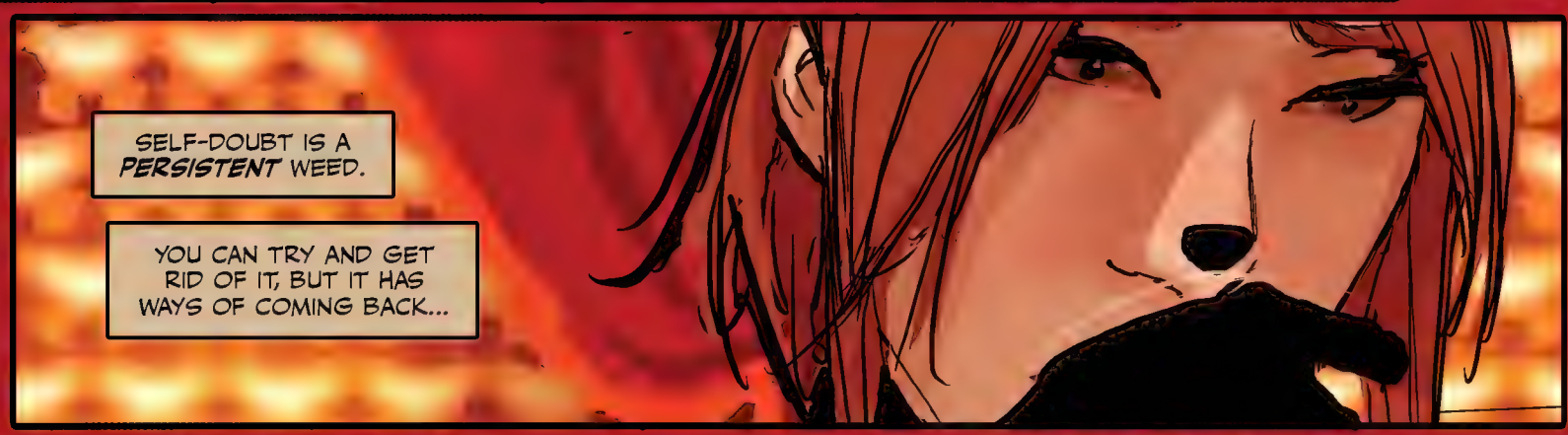
MOST PEOPLE ATTENDING THE PARTY KNEW OF THEM AND OBSERVED THEIR LITTLE...PERFORMANCE WITH ADORATION.
WE WERE *EAGERLY* EXPECTING YOU!

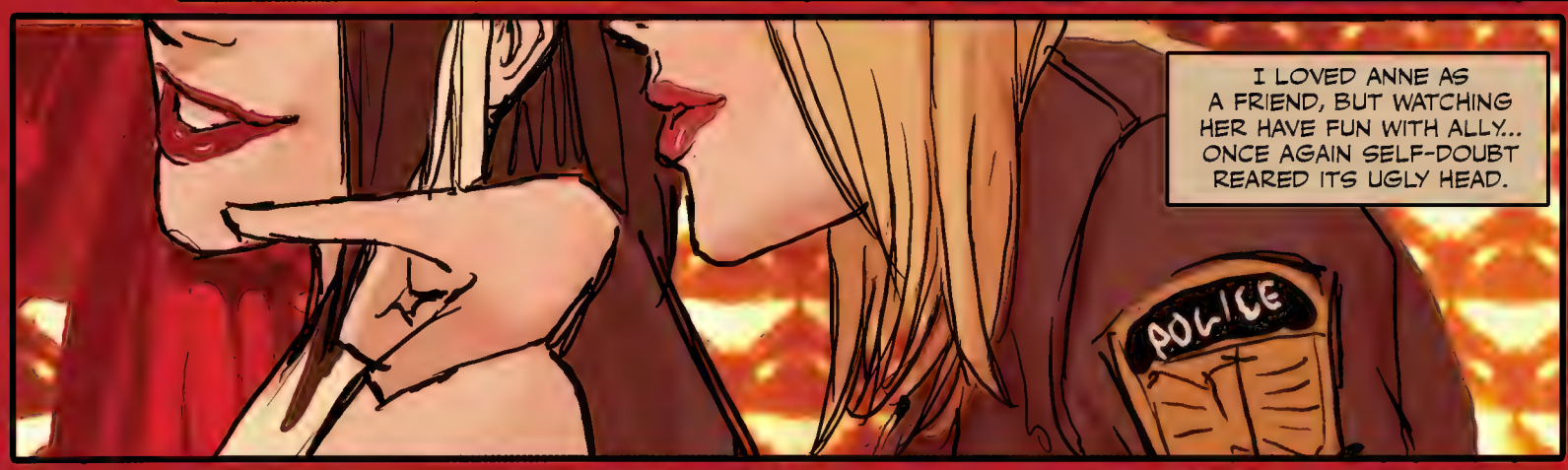
THEY WATCHED IT IN SILENCE...
OVERACTING!
YOUR REIGN OF TERROR ENDS TONIGHT, *MONSTER!*


ANNE AND ALLY, ON THE OTHER HAND...
A *WHIP!* BUT OF COURSE! BECAUSE VAMPIRES FEAR WHIPS!
YOU'D BE *SURPRISED!*

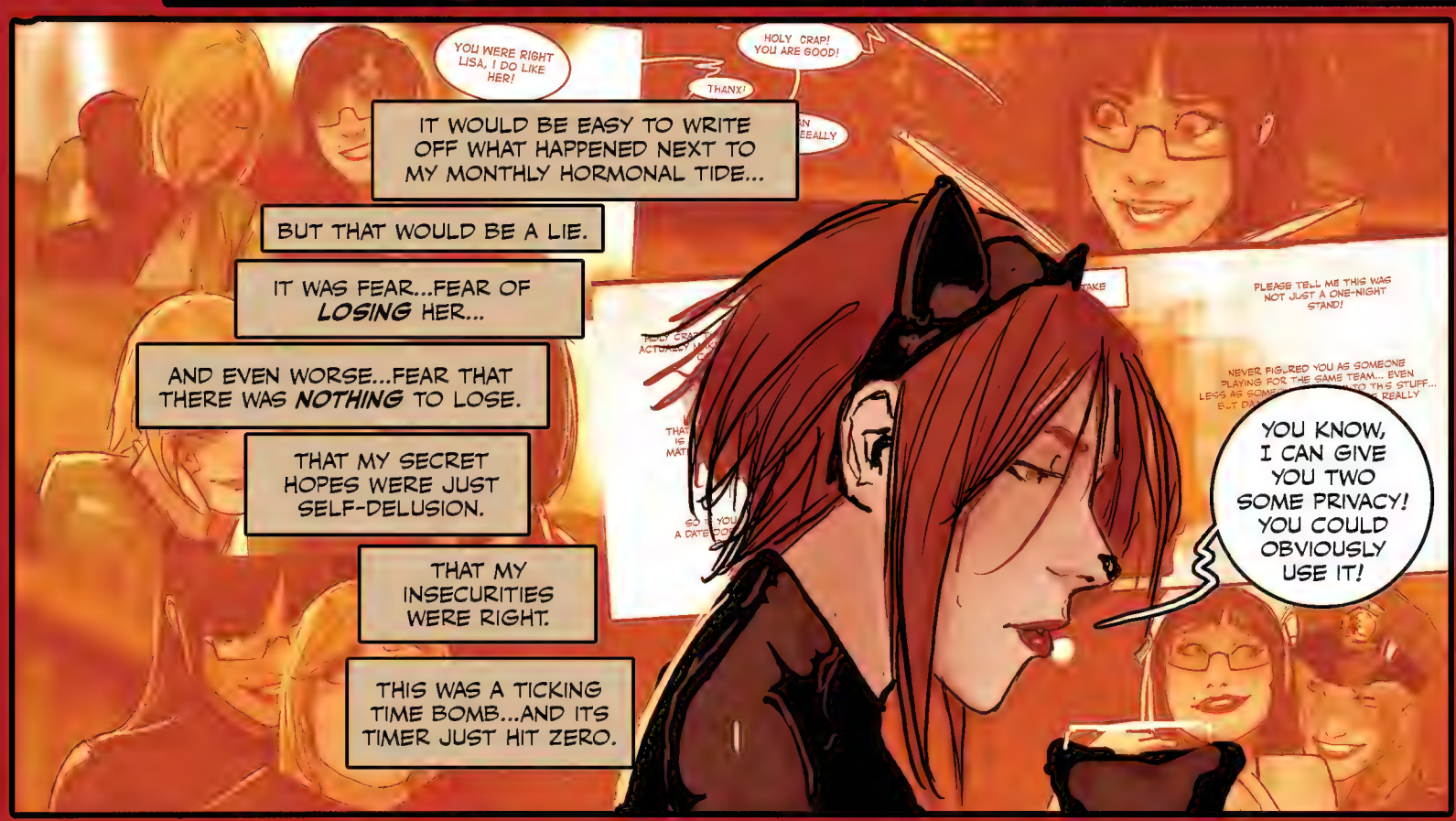

BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT IN AN *AMAZING* TWIST, SHE IS ABOUT TO BE DISARMED!
OH. BE STILL MY HEART!

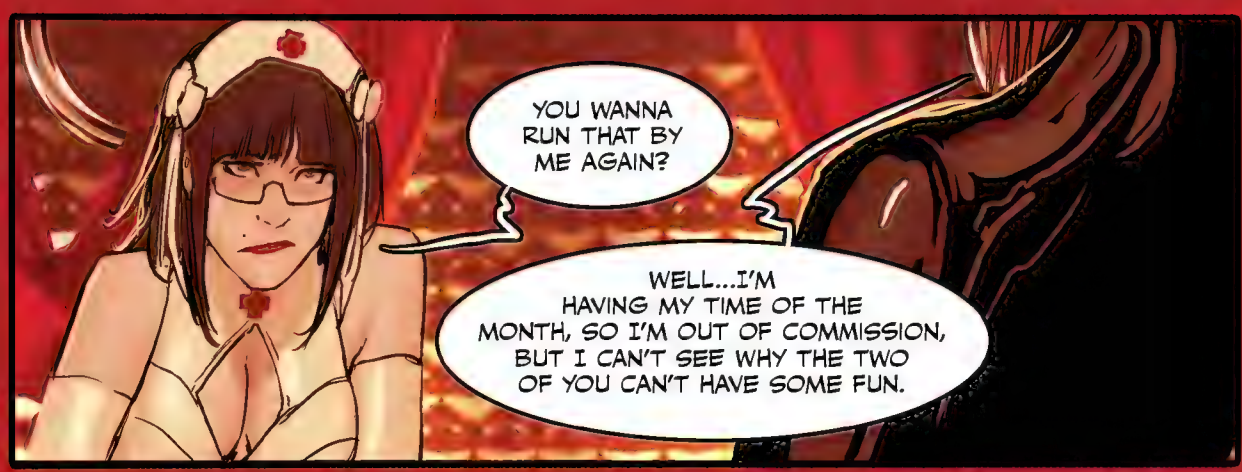

STAHHHP! LET ME GOOO!
AND THE OSCAR GOES TO...
OH GOD!
POLICE

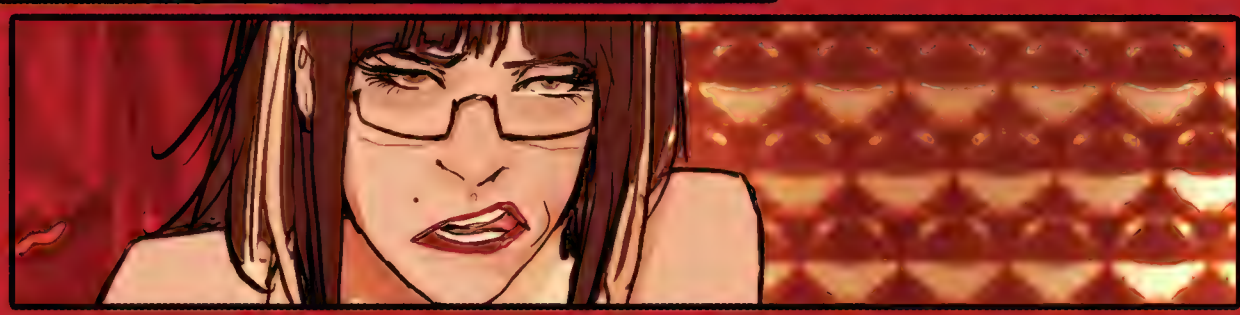

SELF-DOUBT IS A *PERSISTENT* WEED.
YOU CAN TRY AND GET RID OF IT, BUT IT HAS WAYS OF COMING BACK...

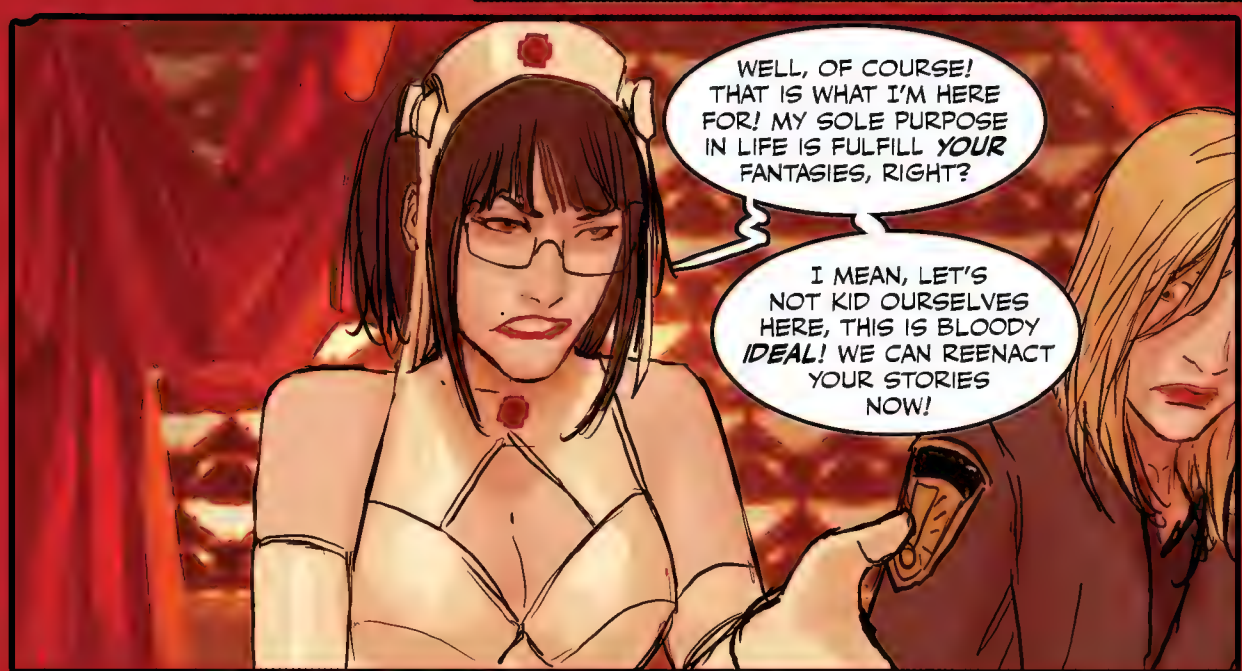

I LOVED ANNE AS A FRIEND, BUT WATCHING HER HAVE FUN WITH ALLY... ONCE AGAIN SELF-DOUBT REARED ITS UGLY HEAD.
POLICE

A SEXUALLY SUBMISSIVE, BEAUTIFUL, ARTISTICALLY CREATIVE, AND FUNNY GIRL...
AND NOW SHE WAS A FRIEND TO ALLY. SHE RANKED AS HIGH AS I DID.
AND WHILE ON ANY GIVEN DAY, I WOULD NEVER CALL MYSELF JEALOUS, OR POSESSIVE...
THAT NIGHT, I WAS *BOTH.*

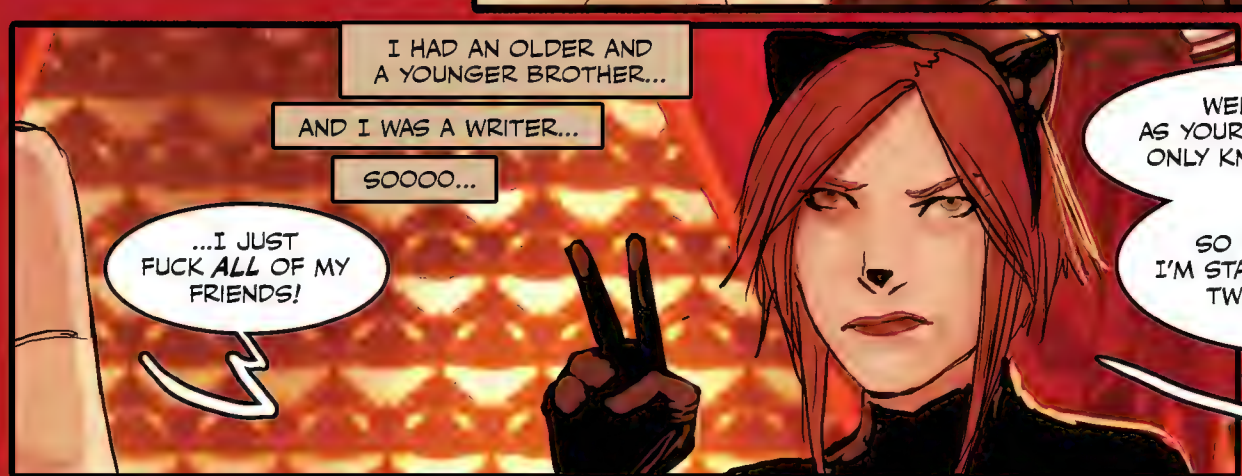

YOU WERE RIGHT LISA, I DO LIKE HER!
HOLY CRAP! YOU ARE GOOD!
THANX!
IT WOULD BE EASY TO WRITE OFF WHAT HAPPENED NEXT TO MY MONTHLY HORMONAL TIDE...
BUT THAT WOULD BE A LIE.
IT WAS FEAR...FEAR OF *LOSING* HER...
AND EVEN WORSE...FEAR THAT THERE WAS *NOTHING* TO LOSE.
THAT MY SECRET HOPES WERE JUST SELF-DELUSION.
THAT MY INSECURITIES WERE RIGHT.
THIS WAS A TICKING TIME BOMB...AND ITS TIMER JUST HIT ZERO.
PLEASE TELL ME THIS WAS NOT JUST A ONE-NIGHT STAND!
YOU KNOW, I CAN GIVE YOU TWO SOME PRIVACY! YOU COULD OBVIOUSLY USE IT!


YOU WANNA RUN THAT BY ME AGAIN?
WELL...I'M HAVING MY TIME OF THE MONTH, SO I'M OUT OF COMMISSION, BUT I CAN'T SEE WHY THE TWO OF YOU CAN'T HAVE SOME FUN.

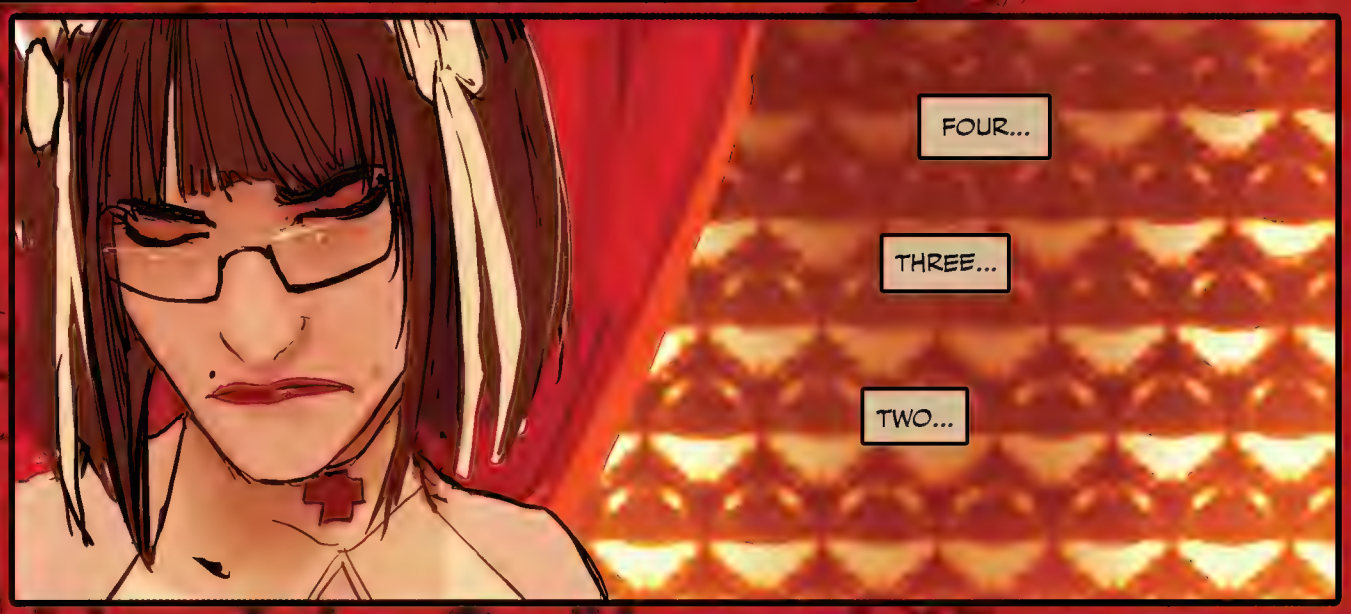


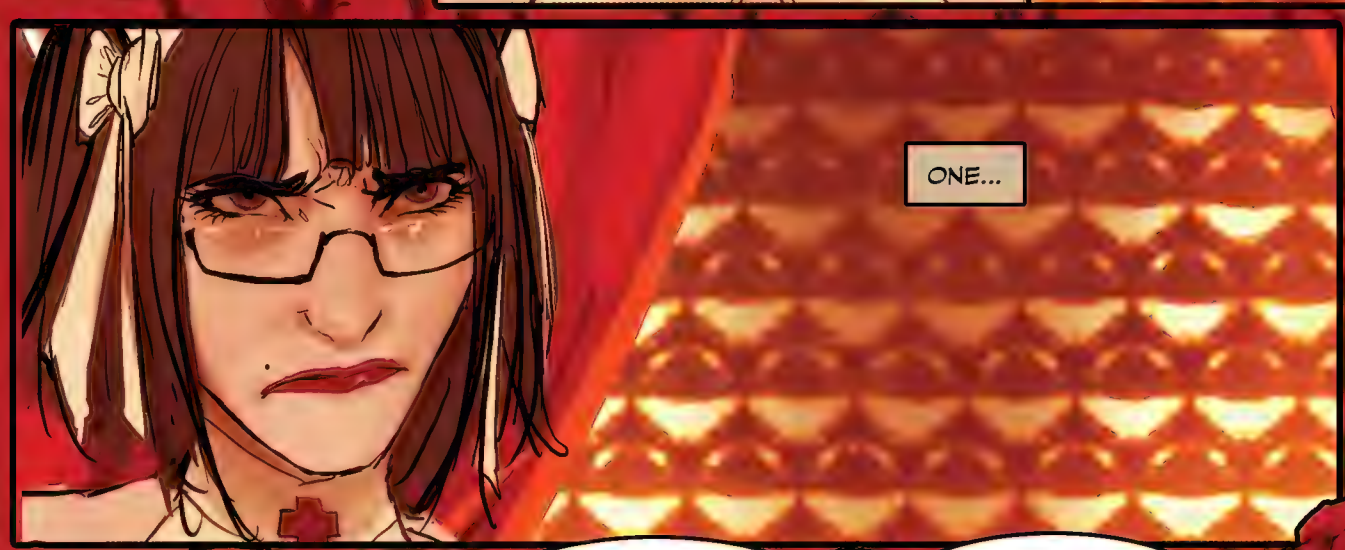

WELL, OF COURSE! THAT IS WHAT I'M HERE FOR! MY SOLE PURPOSE IN LIFE IS FULFILL *YOUR* FANTASIES, RIGHT?
I MEAN, LET'S NOT KID OURSELVES HERE, THIS IS BLOODY *IDEAL!* WE CAN REENACT YOUR STORIES NOW!

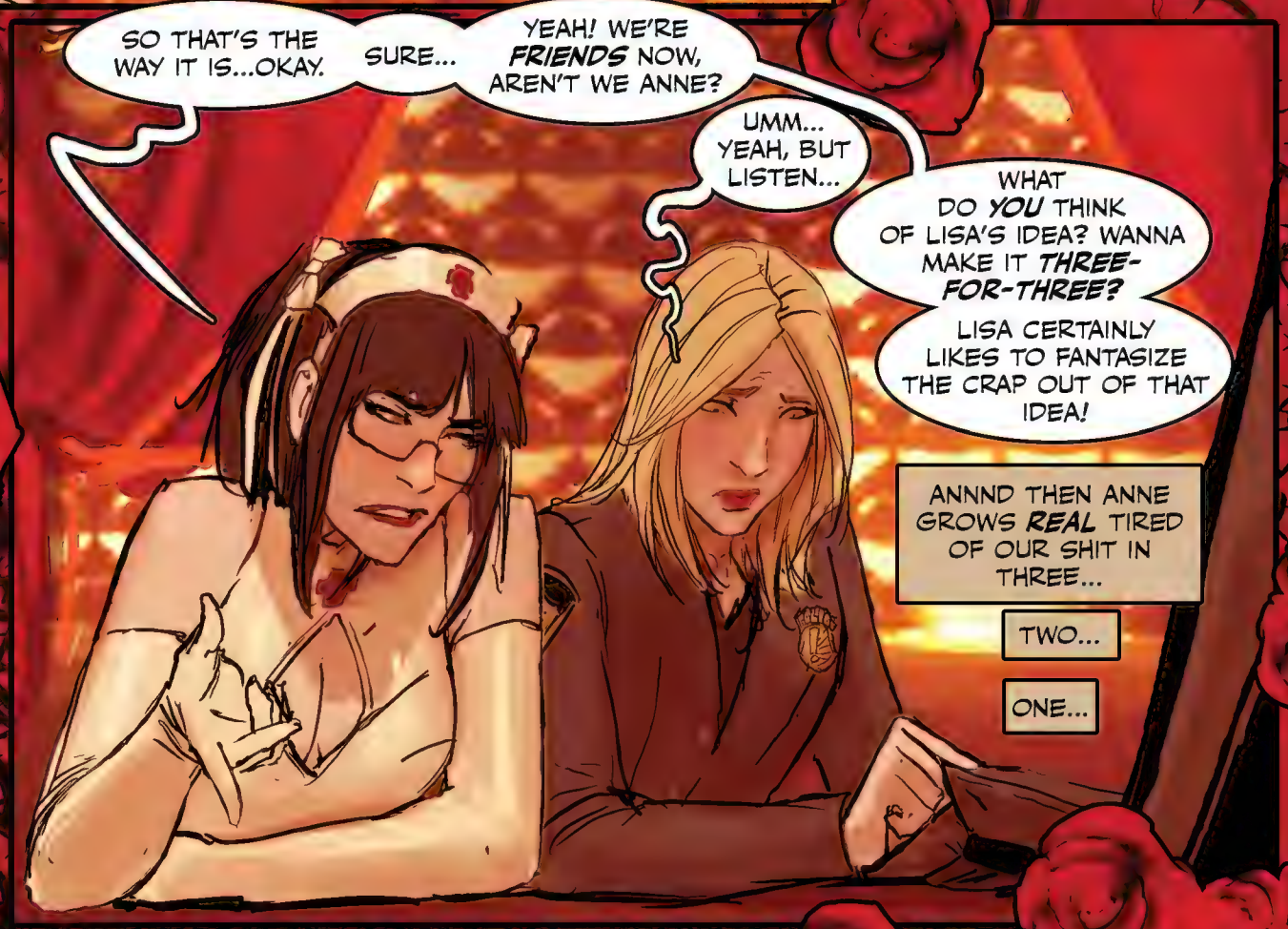
I CAN NOW BECOME THE DOMINATRIX YOU *WANTED* ME TO BE!
THE ALLISON FROM YOUR *STORIES!* WHAT DO YOU THINK? YOU, ME, AND ANNE HERE, JUST THE WAY YOU *ALWAYS* IMAGINED IT?
AFTER ALL, THAT'S HOW I ROLL! I JUST FUCK *ALL* OF MY FRIENDS!
UM...
THE FUCK?
NOW, HERE'S THE THING...ALLY HAD A SISTER WITH WHOM SHE ARGUED AT TIMES...


I HAD AN OLDER AND A YOUNGER BROTHER...
AND I WAS A WRITER...
SOOOO...
...I JUST FUCK *ALL* OF MY FRIENDS!
WELL...AS FAR AS YOUR FRIENDS GO, I ONLY KNOW OF ALAN...
SO FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, YOU ARE TWO FOR TWO!

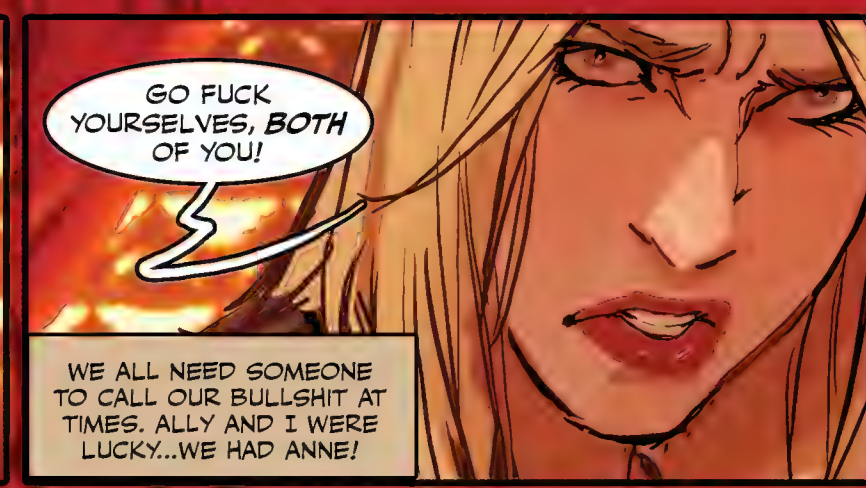
ANNND RATIONALITY JUST LEFT THE BUILDING. ONE SENTENCE, AND I CRUSHED ALL HER HOPES...
THAT SENTENCE HURT HER MORE THAN I COULD IMAGINE.
IN IT, I CONFIRMED WHAT SHE FEARED THE MOST. WE WERE JUST FRIENDS...
AND EVEN THAT WAS ABOUT TO IMPLODE.
IN FIVE...

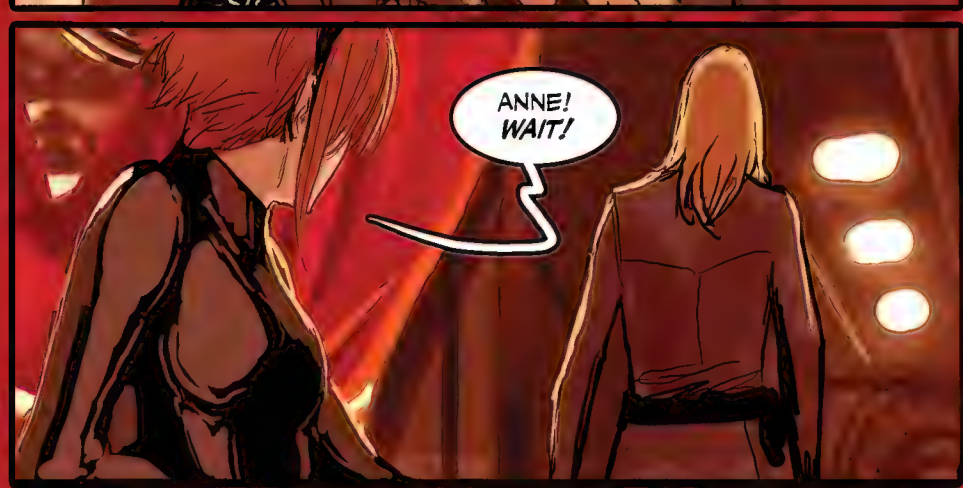

FOUR...
THREE...
TWO...


ONE...


SO THAT'S THE WAY IT IS...OKAY.
SURE...
YEAH! WE'RE FRIENDS NOW, AREN'T WE ANNE?
UMM... YEAH, BUT LISTEN...
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF LISA'S IDEA? WANNA MAKE IT THREE-FOR-THREE?
LISA CERTAINLY LIKES TO FANTASIZE THE CRAP OUT OF THAT IDEA!
ANNND THEN ANNE GROWS REAL TIRED OF OUR SHIT IN THREE...
TWO...
ONE...

YEAH, NO! YOU KNOW WHAT?

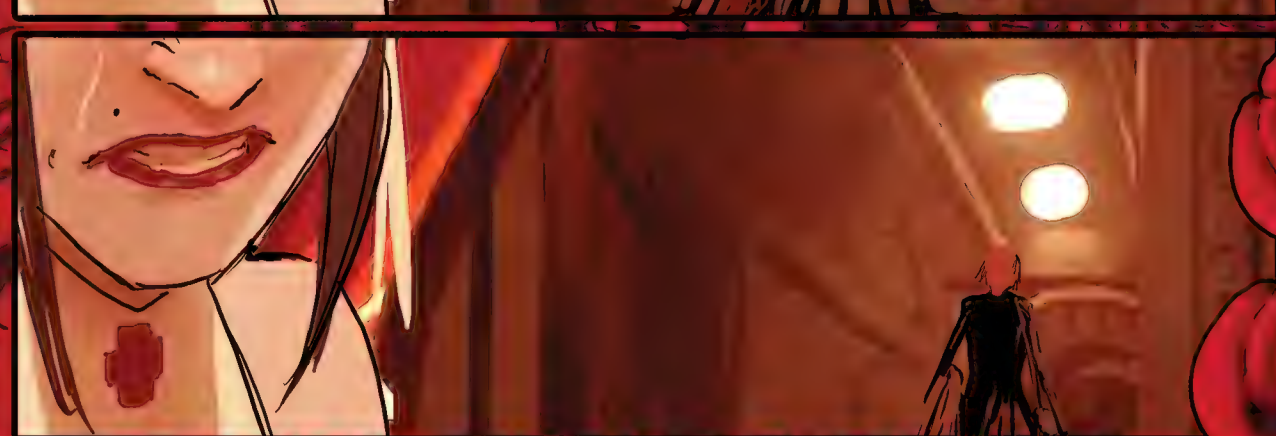

GO FUCK YOURSELVES, BOTH OF YOU!
WE ALL NEED SOMEONE TO CALL OUR BULLSHIT AT TIMES. ALLY AND I WERE LUCKY...WE HAD ANNE!


ANNE! WAIT!

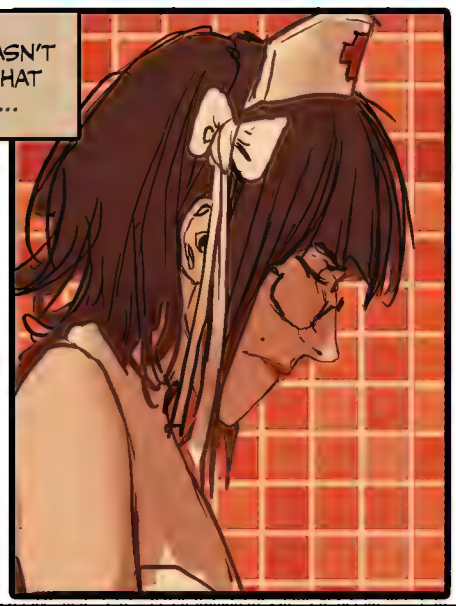
WHAT THE HELL, ALLY? THIS IS HOW YOU TREAT YOUR FRIENDS??? NO WONDER YOU ONLY HAVE TWO!
WHAT HAS TWO THUMBS AND IS A WEAPONS-GRADE HYPOCRITE? THIS GIRL!

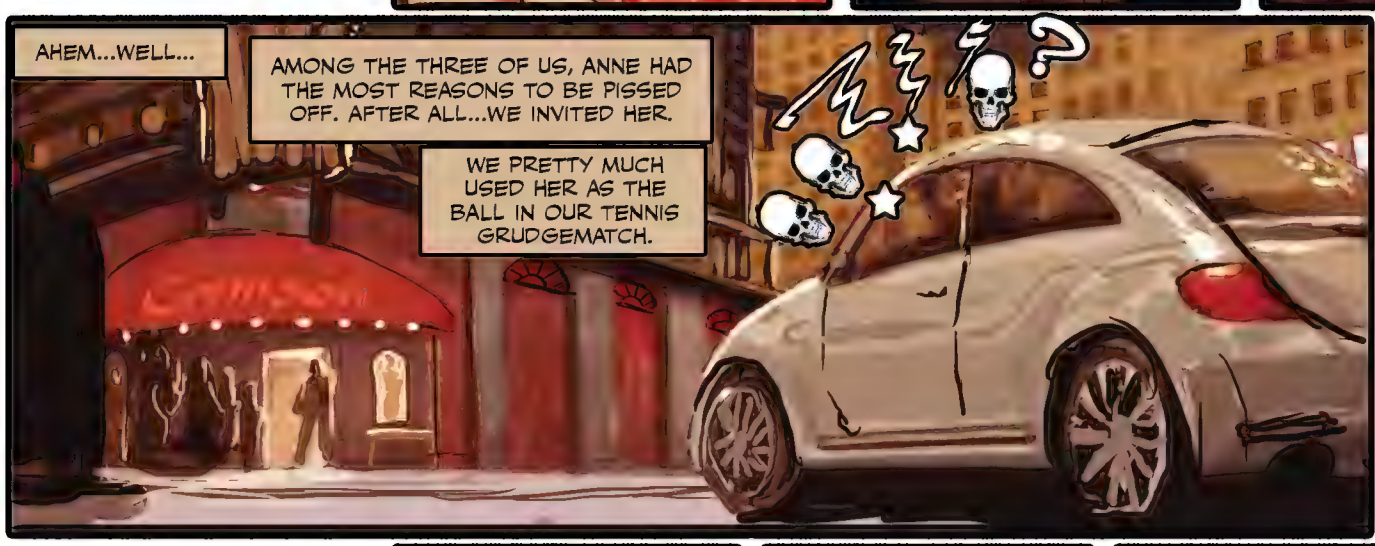
YEAH, WELL... FUCK YOU AND YOUR FRIENDSHIP!

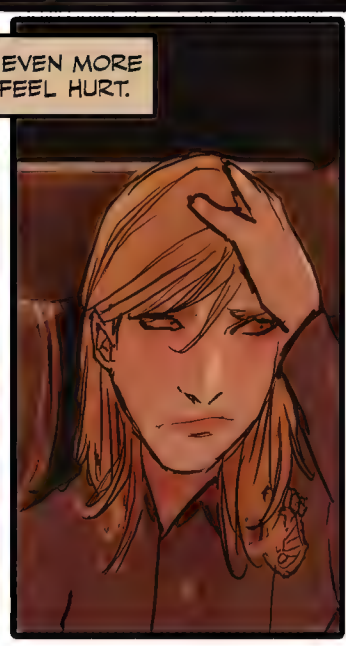
AND BOOM...

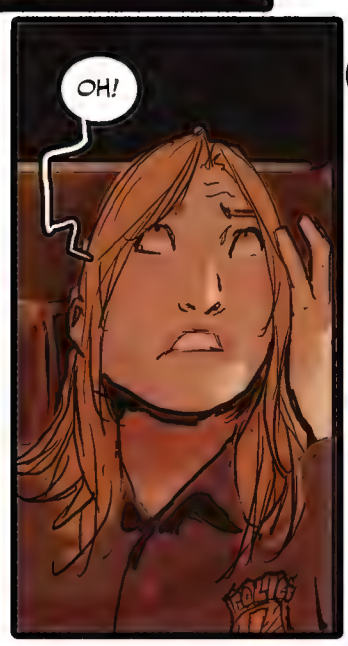


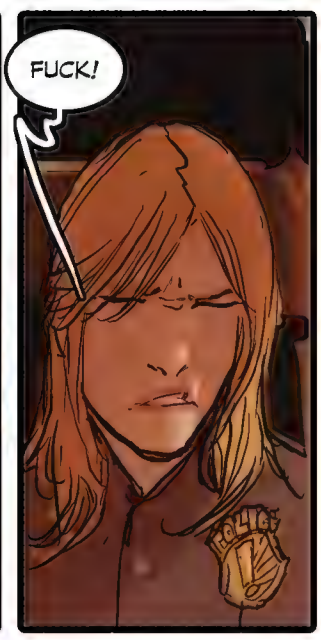
THERE IS A PHOTO WE ALL TOOK A YEAR AGO...
IT WAS DURING OUR APARTMENT WARMING PARTY...
I *LOVE* THAT PHOTO...
I OFTEN LOOK AT IT AND THINK...THOSE SMILES WOULDN'T BE THERE IF IT WASN'T FOR THE TEARS OF THAT NIGHT FIVE YEARS AGO...











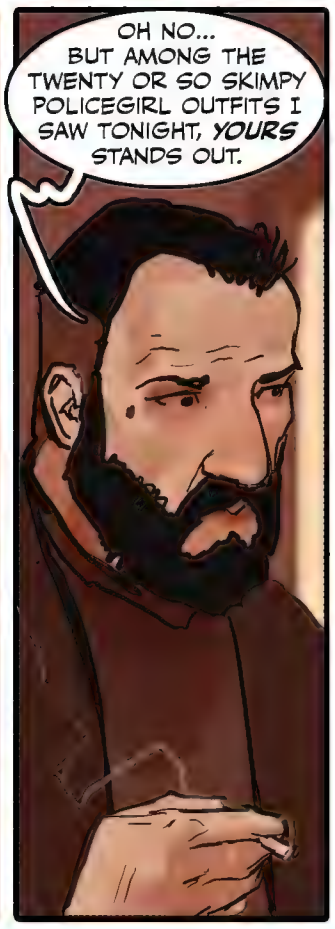
SORRY, WE'RE FULL, BUT AS SOON AS MORE LEAVE I...
COME OON!

EXCUSE ME...UM, I LEFT MY CAP INSIDE AND, WELL, I ACTUALLY RENTED THIS COSTUME...
I MEAN, I'M NOT TRYING TO SCAM YOU! I WAS ACTUALLY INSIDE.

I KNOW.
I REMEMBER YOU!

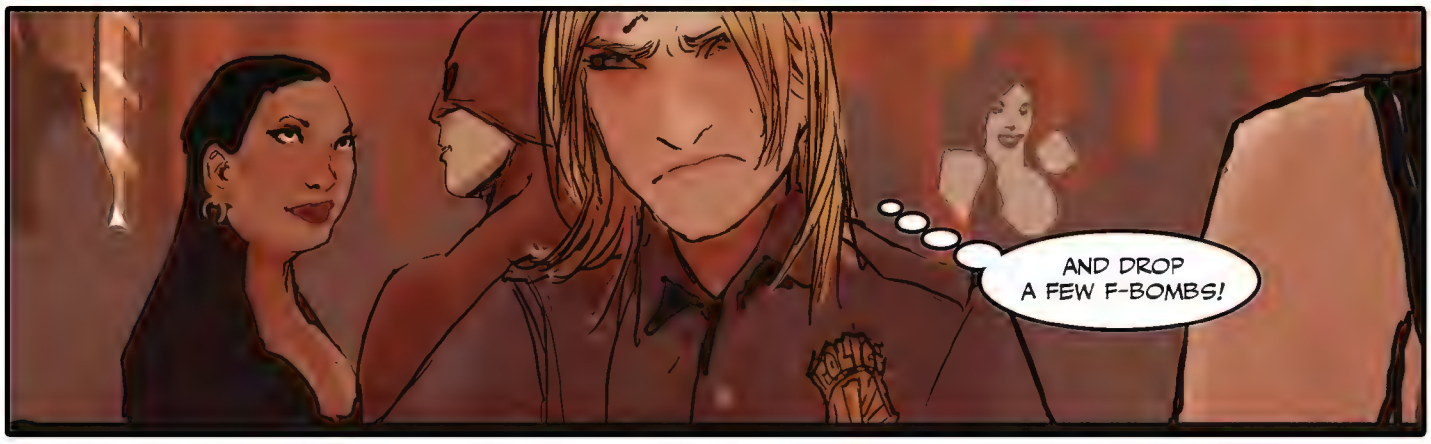
OH!?

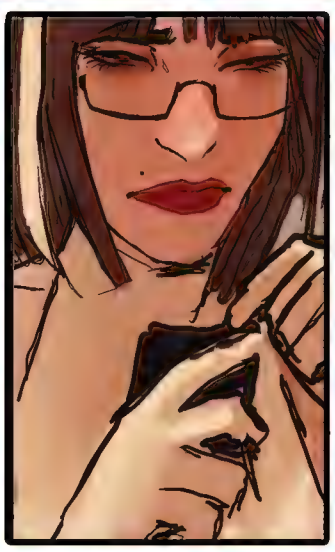
UM, WAIT, SO YOU, LIKE, REMEMBER EVERYONE?


OH NO... BUT AMONG THE TWENTY OR SO SKIMPY POLICEGIRL OUTFITS I SAW TONIGHT, YOURS STANDS OUT.

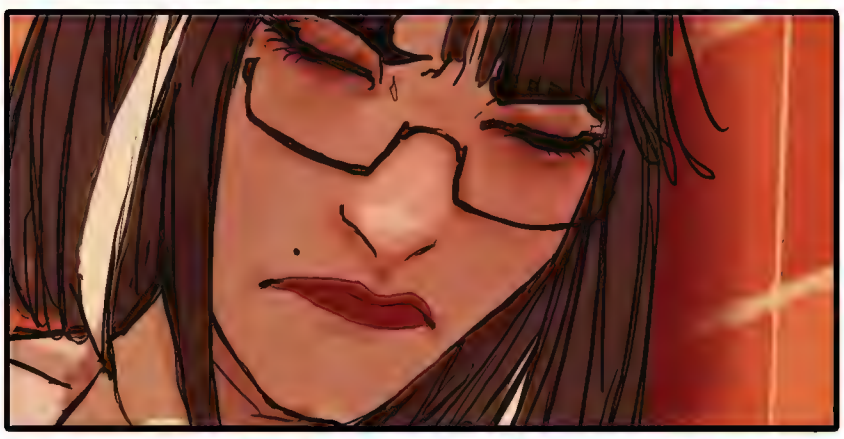
OH...I SEE.
SO, UH... CAN I?

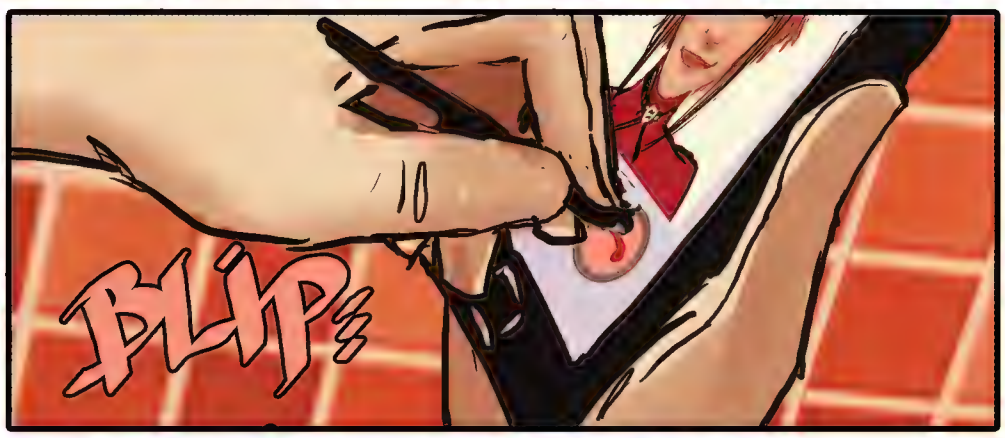
YEAH, GO ON!
HEEY!!!
THANKS! I'M JUST GONNA GET MY CAP!


AND DROP A FEW F-BOMBS!

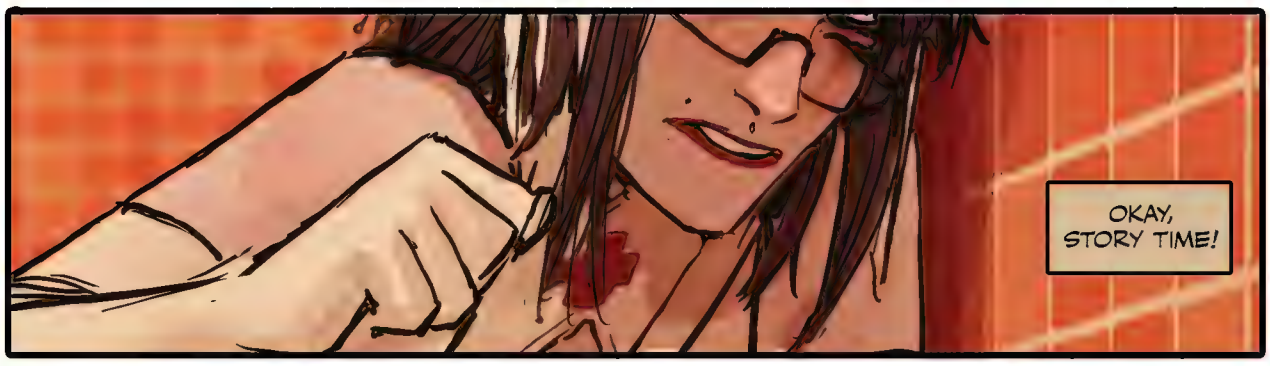


...I JUST FUCK ALL OF MY FRIENDS!
WELL...AS FAR AS YOUR FRIENDS GO, I ONLY KNOW OF ALAN...
SO FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, YOU ARE TWO FOR TWO!



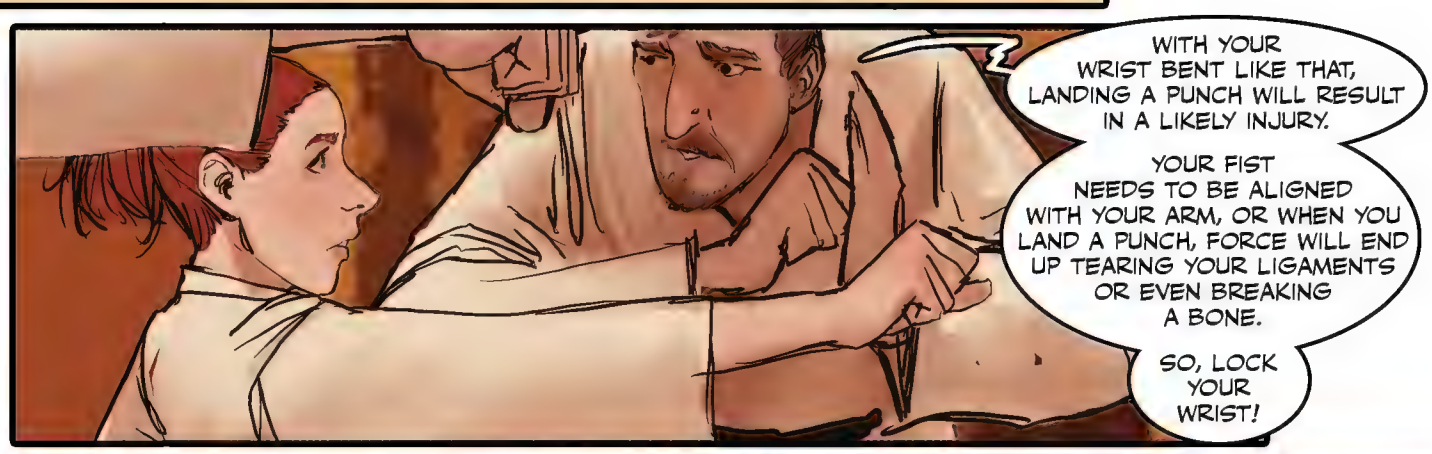

BLIP

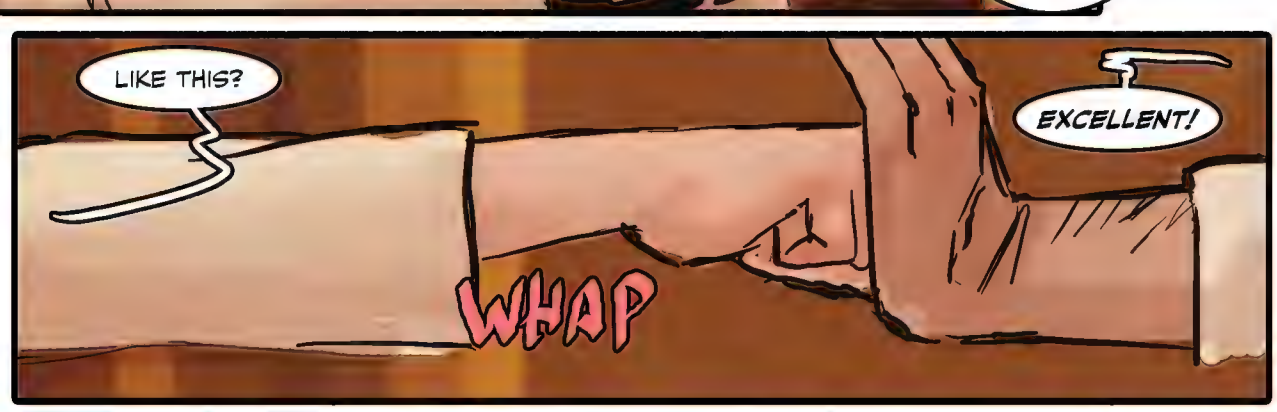
THUMP!

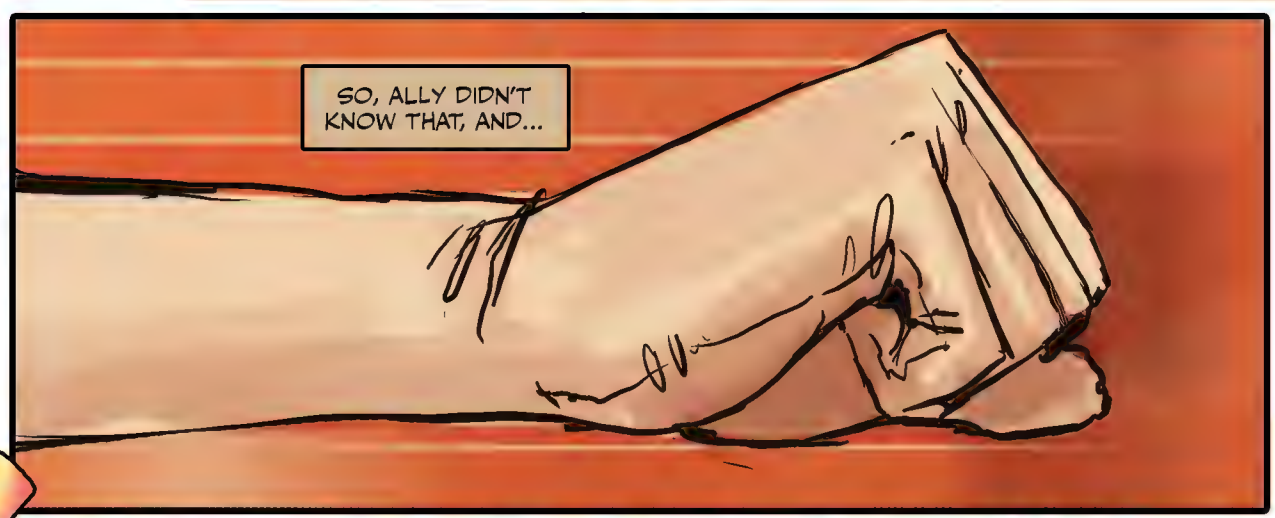


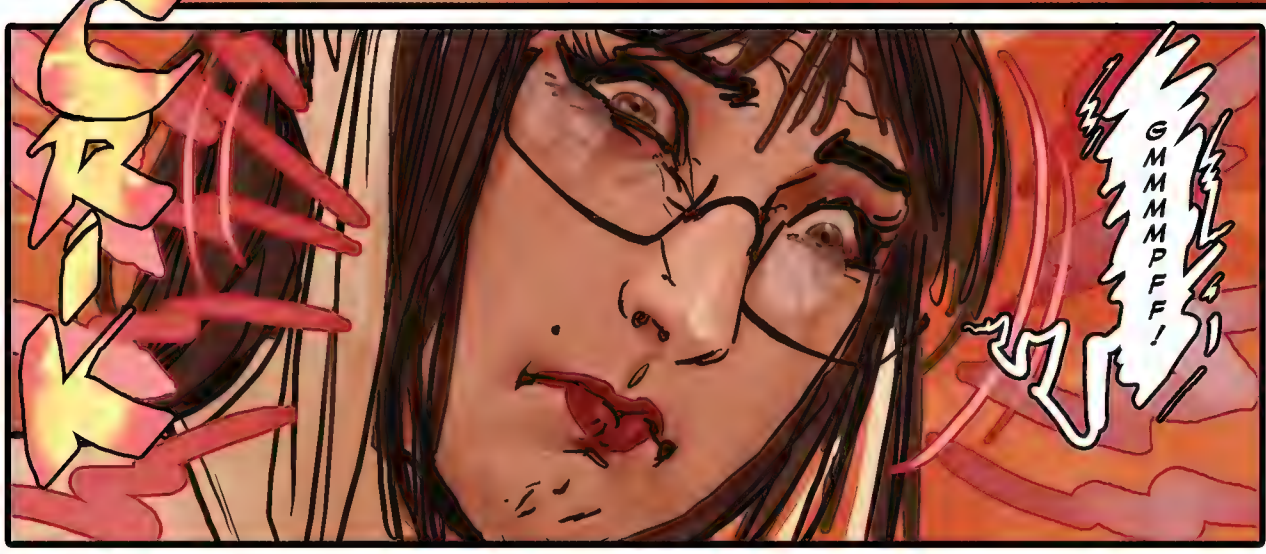
WHEN I WAS A KID, MY BROTHER MIKE STARTED GOING TO TAEKWONDO...OF COURSE, BEING A CLINGY LITTLE SISTER, I WANTED TO GO AS WELL.

NOW, ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I LEARNED THERE WAS...



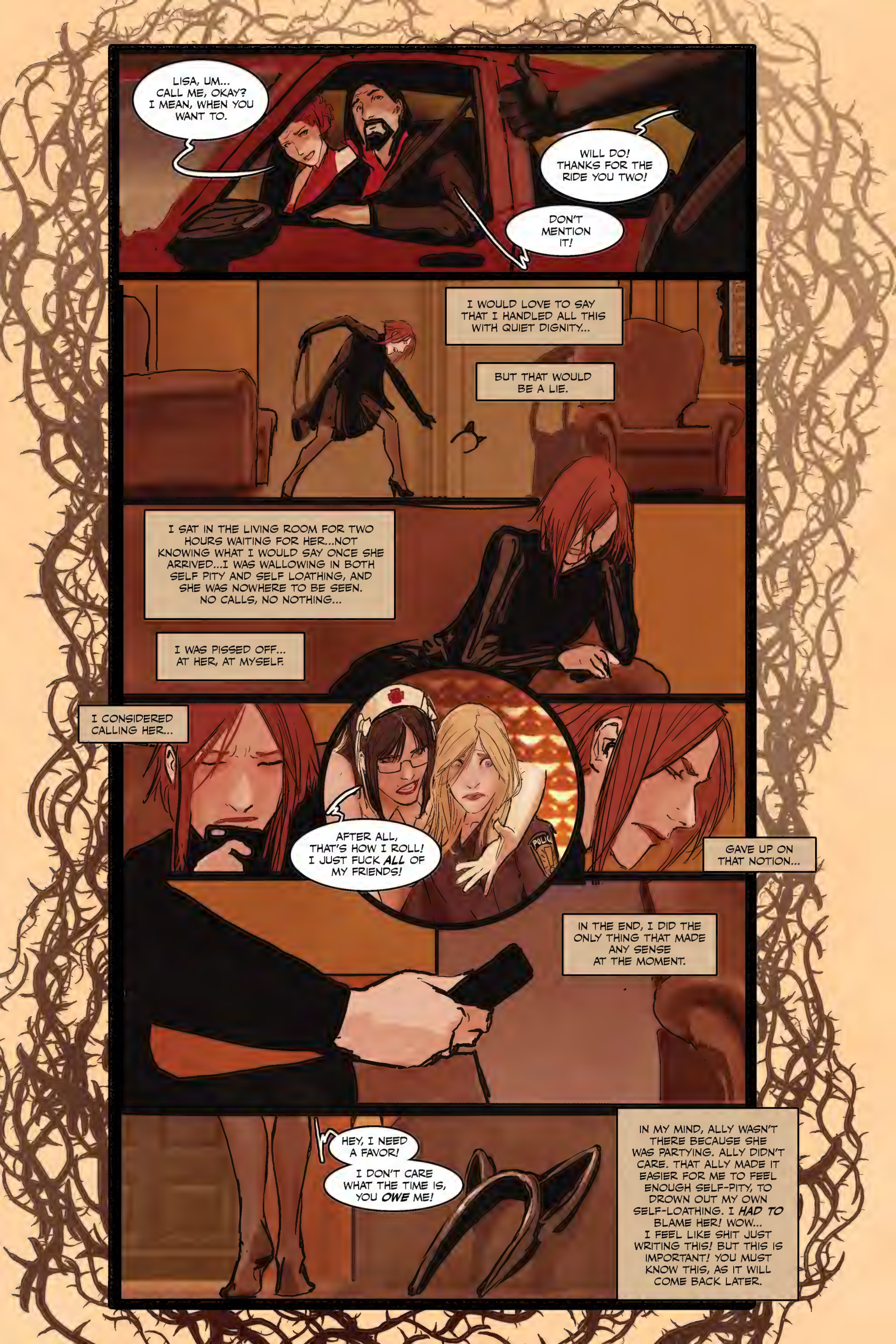


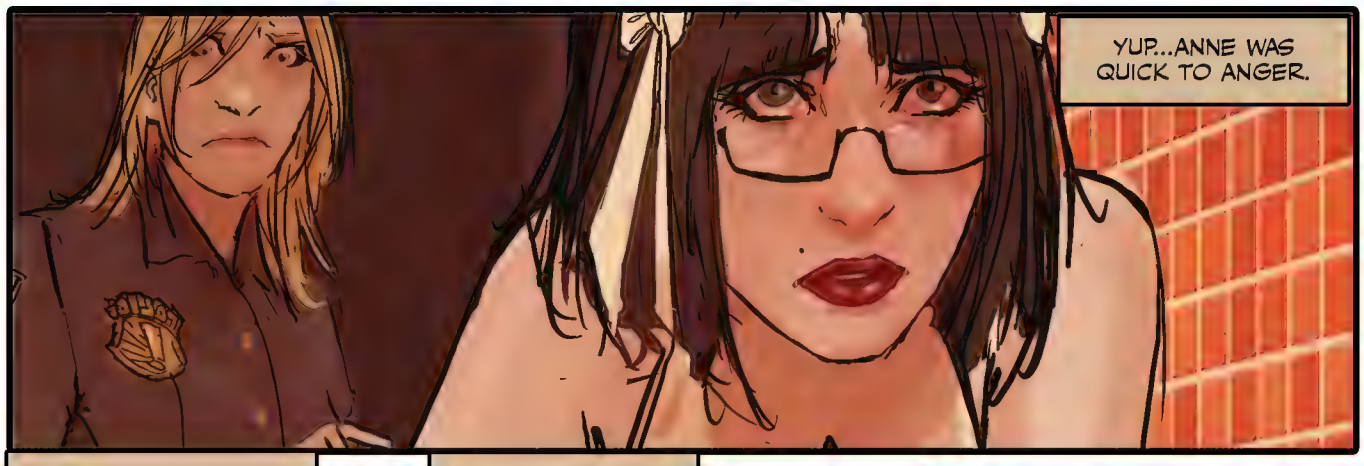


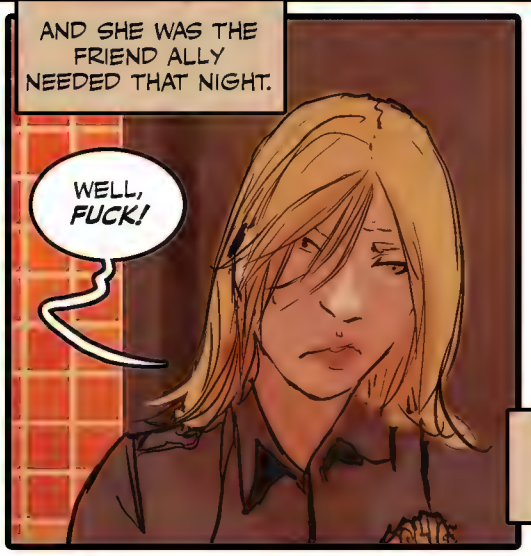


ANYHOO...WHILE ALLY WAS TRYING HER HARDEST TO SUPRESS A SCREAM, I WAS JUST ARRIVING HOME, COURTESY OF CASSIE AND TOM...WHO TO MY GREAT SURPRISE ASKED VERY FEW QUESTIONS.

ACCORDING TO CASSIE, I HAD A HUGE ***"DON'T FUCKING ASK"*** EXPRESSION ON MY FACE...


LISA, UM... CALL ME, OKAY? I MEAN, WHEN YOU WANT TO.
WILL DO! THANKS FOR THE RIDE YOU TWO!
DON'T MENTION IT!
I WOULD LOVE TO SAY THAT I HANDLED ALL THIS WITH QUIET DIGNITY...
BUT THAT WOULD BE A LIE.
I SAT IN THE LIVING ROOM FOR TWO HOURS WAITING FOR HER...NOT KNOWING WHAT I WOULD SAY ONCE SHE ARRIVED...I WAS WALLOWING IN BOTH SELF PITY AND SELF LOATHING, AND SHE WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN. NO CALLS, NO NOTHING...
I WAS PISSED OFF... AT HER, AT MYSELF.
I CONSIDERED CALLING HER...
AFTER ALL, THAT'S HOW I ROLL! I JUST FUCK ALL OF MY FRIENDS!
GAVE UP ON THAT NOTION...
IN THE END, I DID THE ONLY THING THAT MADE ANY SENSE AT THE MOMENT.
HEY, I NEED A FAVOR!
I DON'T CARE WHAT THE TIME IS, YOU OWE ME!
IN MY MIND, ALLY WASN'T THERE BECAUSE SHE WAS PARTYING. ALLY DIDN'T CARE. THAT ALLY MADE IT EASIER FOR ME TO FEEL ENOUGH SELF-PITY, TO DROWN OUT MY OWN SELF-LOATHING. I HAD TO BLAME HER! WOW... I FEEL LIKE SHIT JUST WRITING THIS! BUT THIS IS IMPORTANT! YOU MUST KNOW THIS, AS IT WILL COME BACK LATER.





HEY! SHE DID DROP *ONE* F-BOMB.

EVEN BEFORE SHE MET ALLY, ANNE HAD SOME...SHALL WE SAY, PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS.

MOST OF THEM WERE SHAPED BY THE DIRECT INFLUENCE OF MY STORIES SO I GUESS I'LL TAKE ***SOME*** RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT.

TRUTH IS, EVEN AFTER MEETING ALLY IN PERSON, THOSE PRECONCEPTIONS WERE STILL A LINGERING THOUGHT...

WELL...UNTIL THAT NIGHT AT THE CRIMSON. THAT WAS WHEN THE ILLUSION WAS BROKEN.

SIGH...

YOU KNOW... YOU LEFT YOUR COAT IN THE BOOTH...

SNIFF... I KNOW.

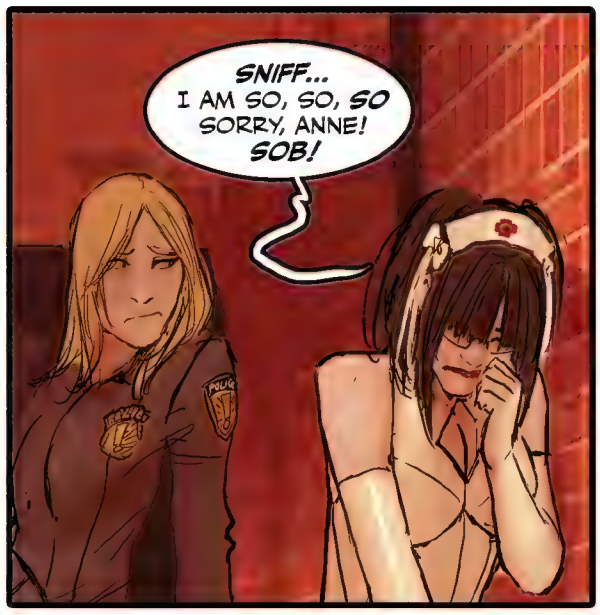
WELL... THIS NIGHT JUST WENT UP ITS OWN ASS.

SOB... I'M SORRY!

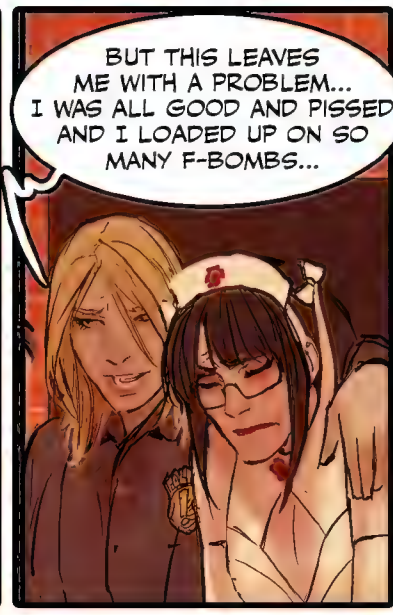
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED THERE, ALLY?

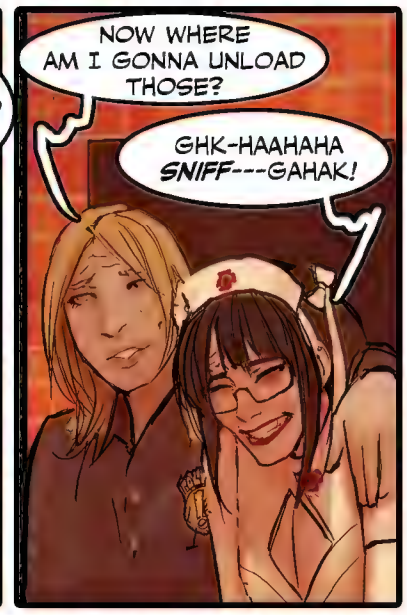
IT'S A LONG STORY...

AND I'M SORRY! YOU... YOU HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ALL THIS.


SNIFF... I AM SO, SO, SO SORRY, ANNE! SOB!

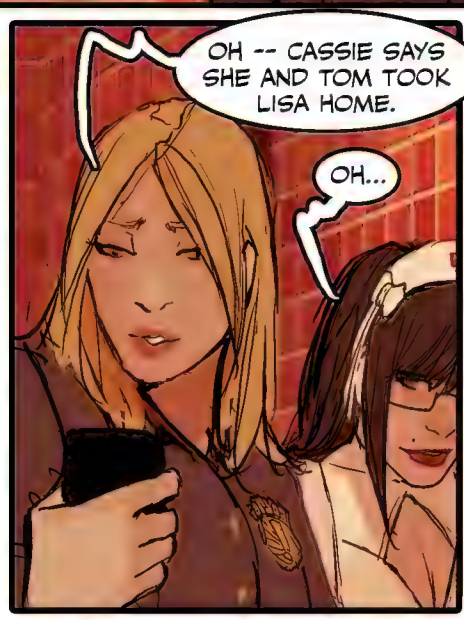
IT'S OKAY...
APOLOGY ACCEPTED.

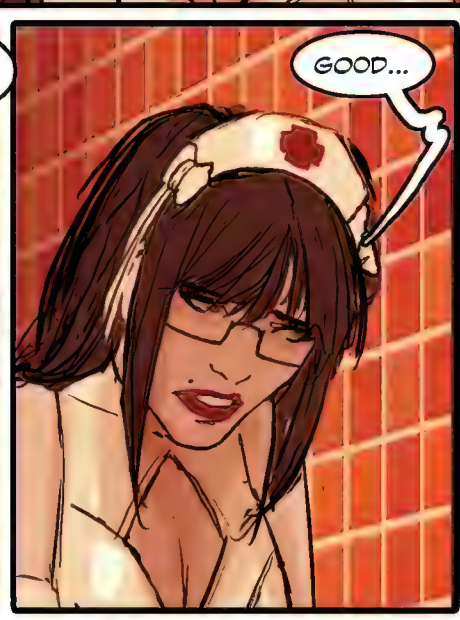

BUT THIS LEAVES ME WITH A PROBLEM... I WAS ALL GOOD AND PISSED AND I LOADED UP ON SO MANY F-BOMBS...


NOW WHERE AM I GONNA UNLOAD THOSE?
GHK-HAAHAHA SNIFF---GAHAK!

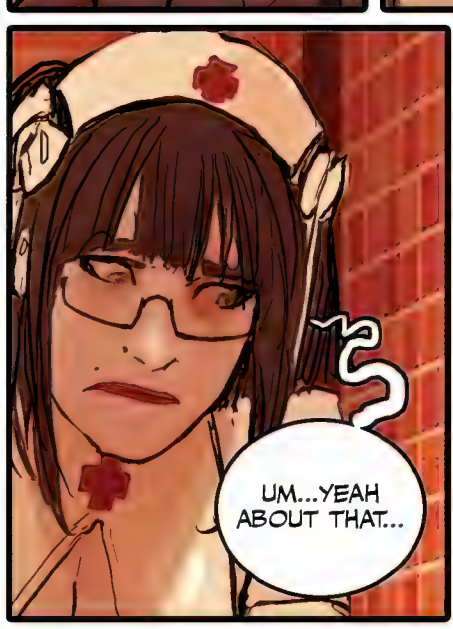
OH, ALLY DID I EVER TELL YOU, YOU HAVE THE WORST LAUGH I HAVE EVER HEARD?
BWAHAH-SOB-GAHAH...
YOU REALLY ARE A SWEET-TALKER!

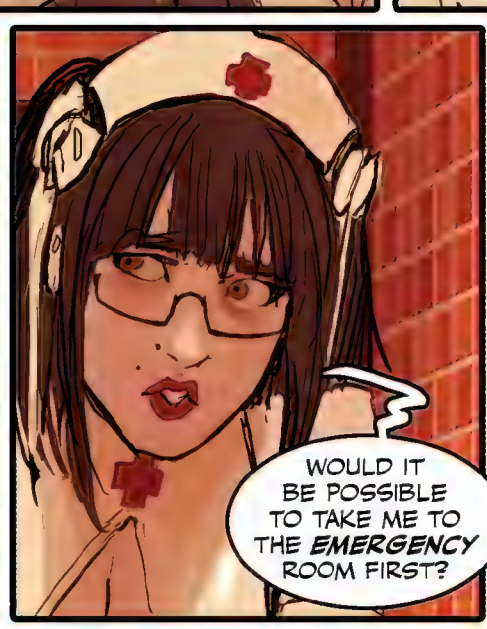
OF COURSE! HUH?
BI-BLIP


OH -- CASSIE SAYS SHE AND TOM TOOK LISA HOME.
OH...


GOOD...

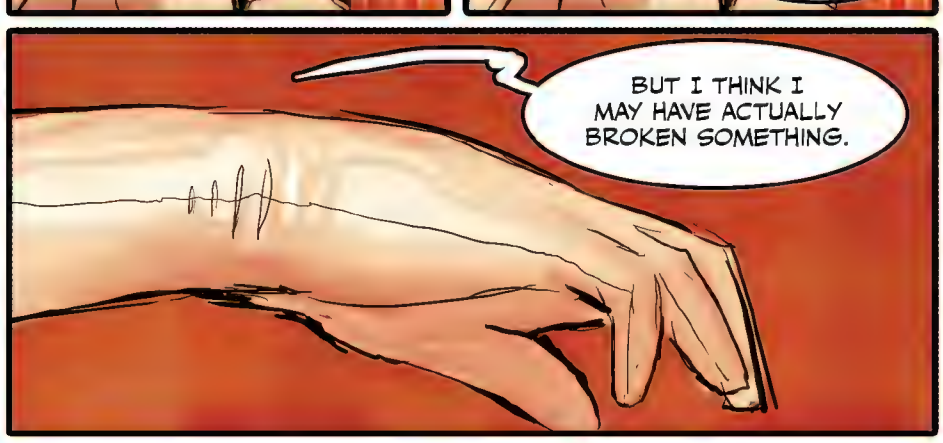
COME ON, YOU SILLY DOMINATRIX! I'LL TAKE YOU HOME, AND YOU CAN FIX WHAT IS BROKEN!

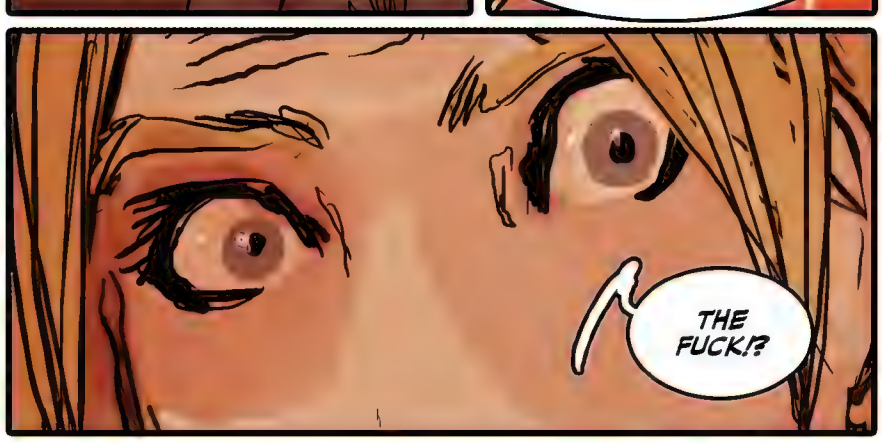

UM...YEAH ABOUT THAT...

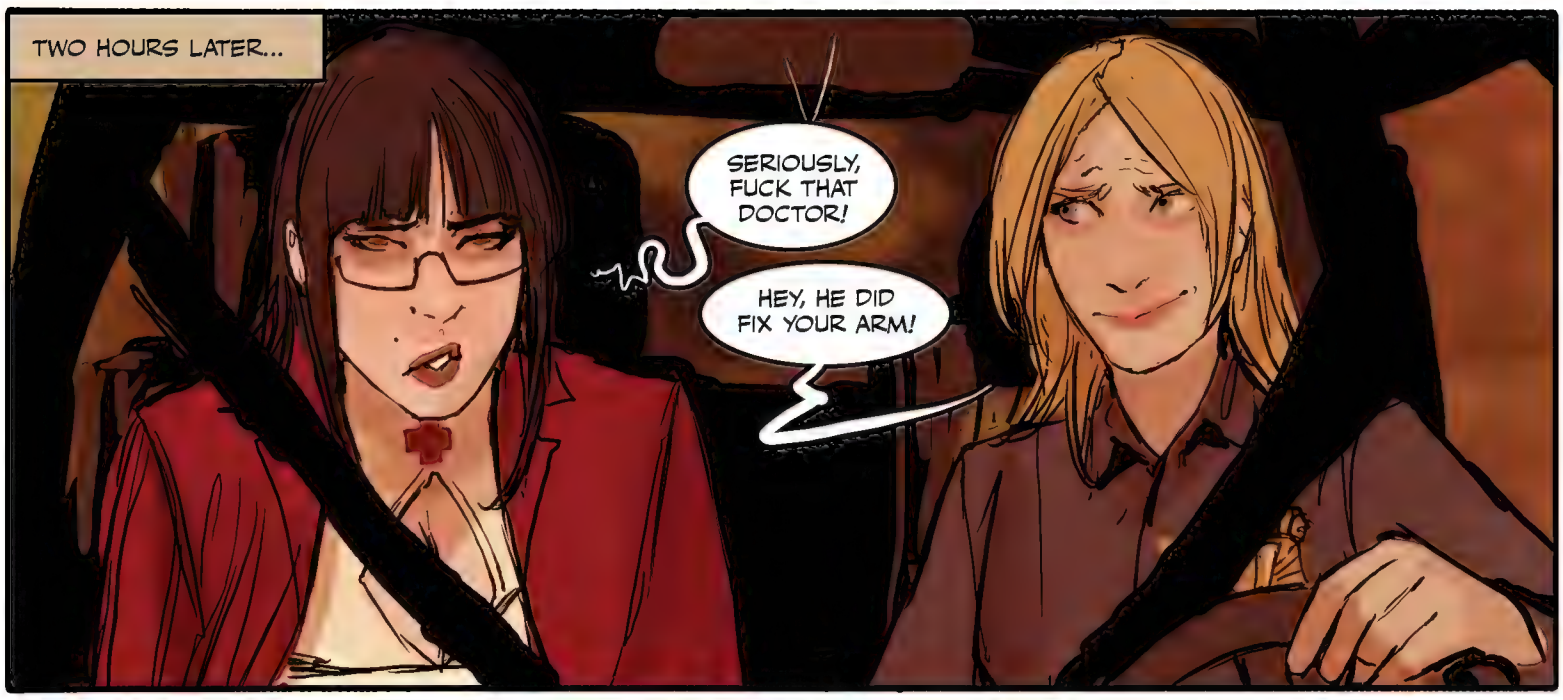

WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO TAKE ME TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM FIRST?

HUH? WHY!?

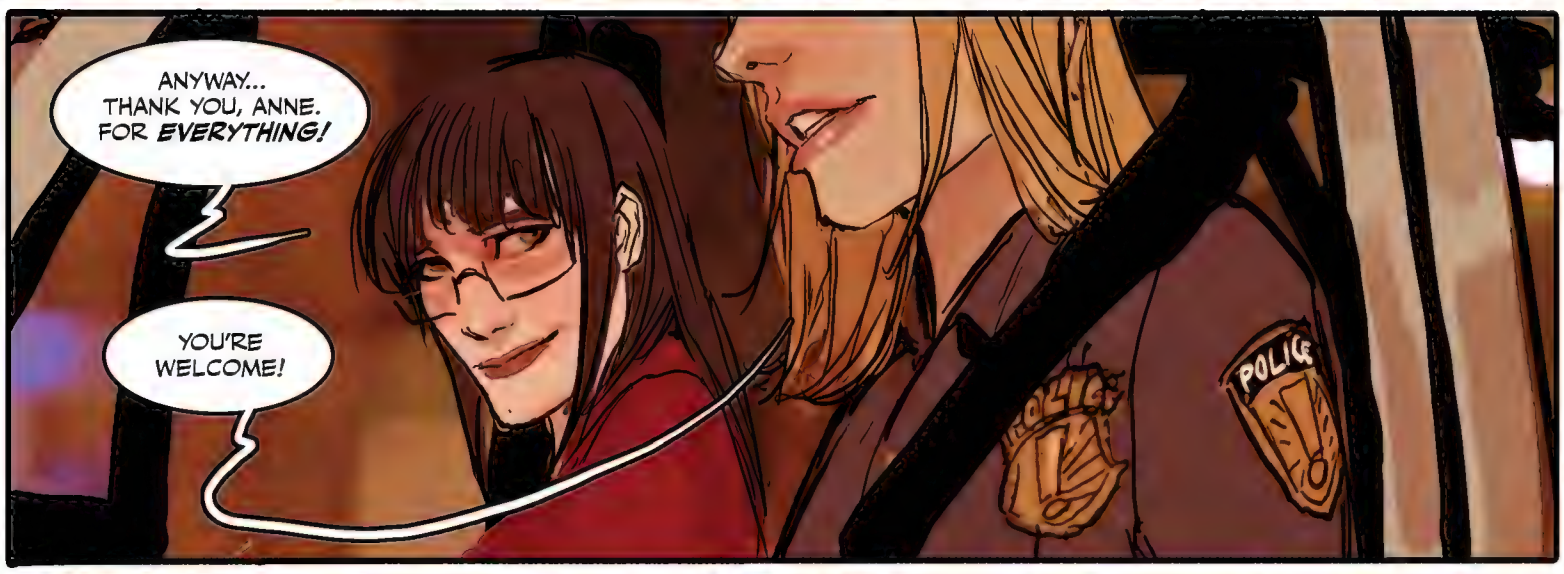
WELL...UM... I WAS KINDA WAITING HERE TO SEE IF THE PAIN WOULD GO AWAY...

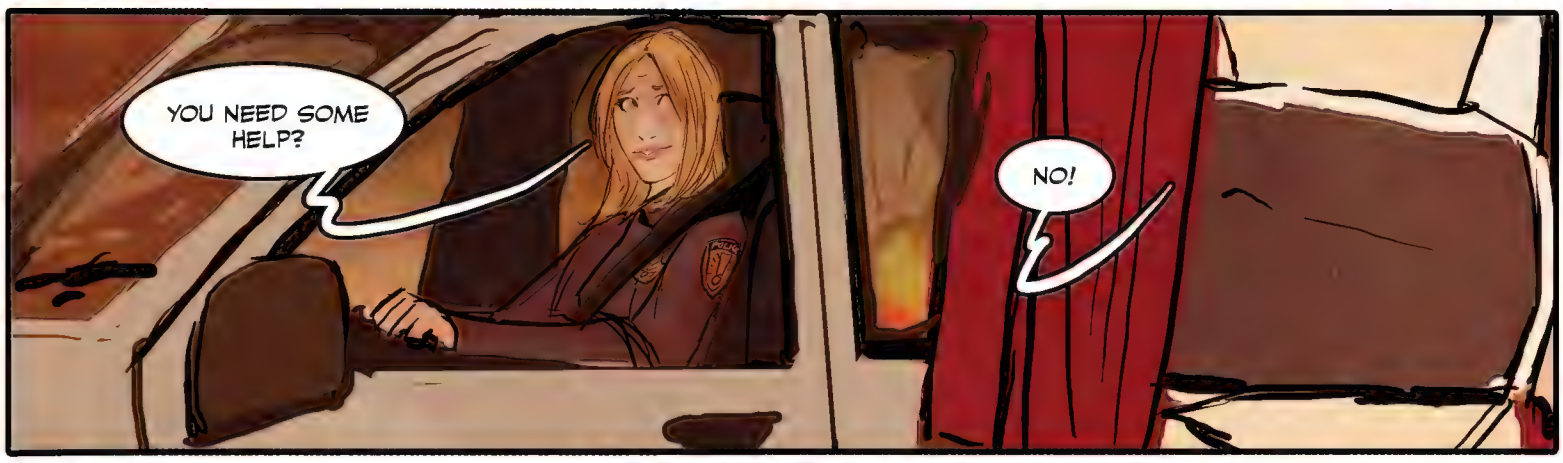

BUT I THINK I MAY HAVE ACTUALLY BROKEN SOMETHING.


THE FUCK!?

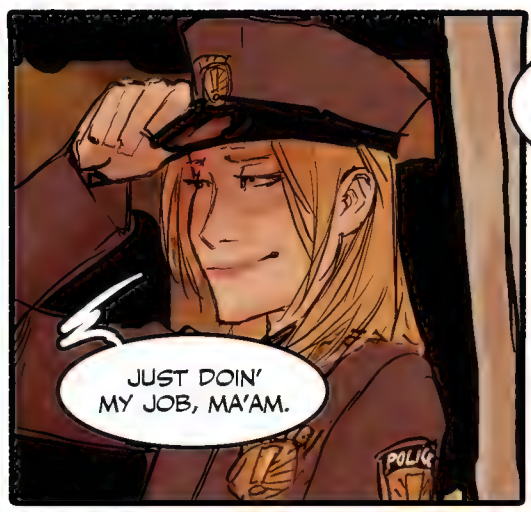

TWO HOURS LATER...
SERIOUSLY, FUCK THAT DOCTOR!
HEY, HE DID FIX YOUR ARM!

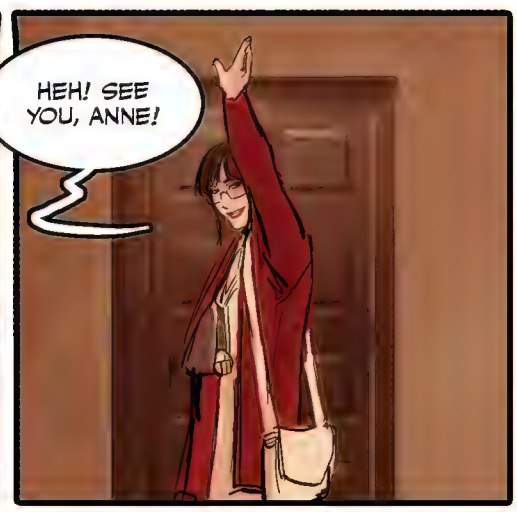
SURE! NURSE, GET ME THE SCISSORS! NOT YOU, MISS CARTER!
NURSE, HAND ME THE SPLINT! NOT YOU, MISS CARTER!
NURSE, HAND ME YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE INFO...YES YOU, MISS CARTER!
IT WAS KIND OF FUNNY!
FUCKING HILARIOUS!


ANYWAY... THANK YOU, ANNE. FOR EVERYTHING!
YOU'RE WELCOME!
POLICE
POLICE


YOU NEED SOME HELP?
NO!

BUT THANK YOU, OFFICER!


JUST DOIN' MY JOB, MA'AM.


HEH! SEE YOU, ANNE!

ALLY TOLD ME ONE OF THE LAST THINGS SHE THOUGHT BEFORE ENTERING WAS: MAYBE THIS NIGHT *COULD* BE SAVED!
MAYBE IT COULD HAVE. I OFTEN WONDER WHAT WOULD HAVE CHANGED.
BUT...AS SAD AS WRITING ABOUT THIS MAKES ME...
I HAVE NO REGRETS.
I'm gonna spend some time with my parents. I think we both need some time to think.
BECAUSE, AS I SAID, WITHOUT THE TEARS, AND THE PAIN OF THAT NIGHT...

WITHOUT THE FEELING OF LOSS...

SNIFF...

THERE WOULD BE NO SMILES LATER ON...

GHK!

THIS WAS OUR *LOW* POINT...

BUT LUCKILY, THINGS *DO* GET BETTER. THEY GET...*AMAZING!*

6 MY APPRECIATION
5 MY FRIENDSHIP
1 MY JEALOUSY

PLEASE!
EVERYTHING I DID...I DID IT FOR YOU! PLEASE BELIEVE ME!

I *WANTED* TO BELIEVE HER.

I *WANTED* TO EMBRACE THE SWEET LIES.

BUT I KNEW BETTER...

SHE WAS *POISON* TO ME.

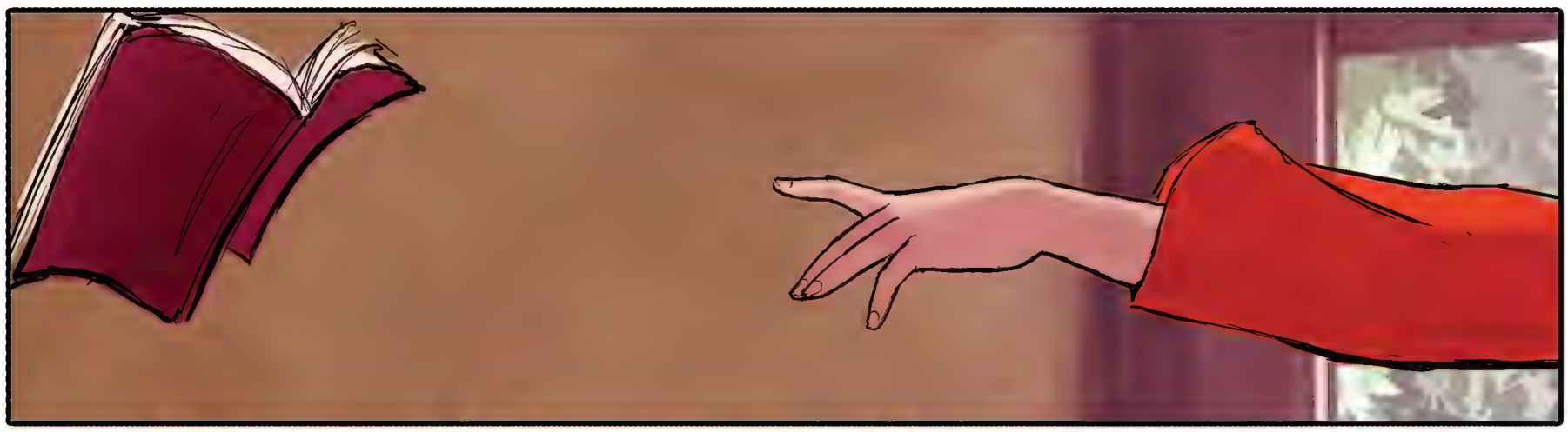
NO...

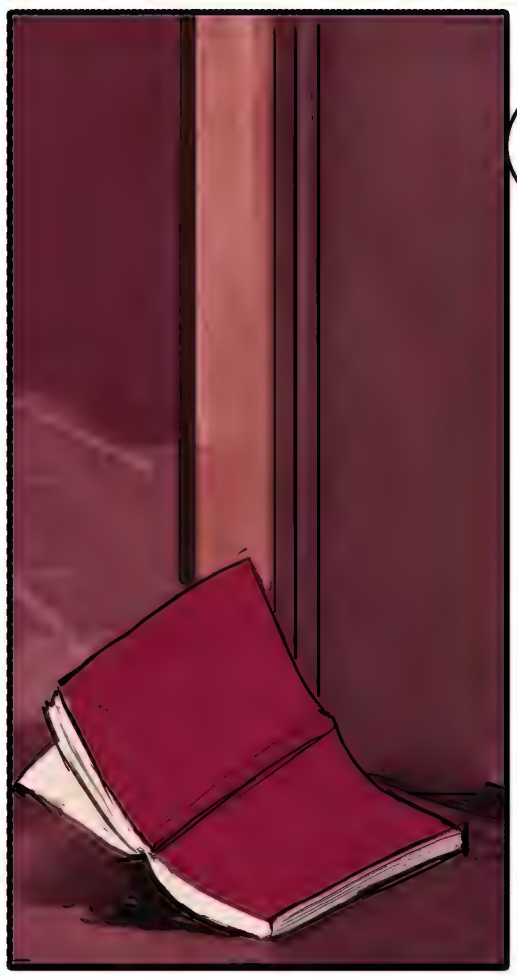
MASKS FALL NOW. NO MORE MAKE-BELIEVE.

GOODBYE, ALLISON.

I TURNED FROM ALLISON AND WAS LISBETH NO MORE.

THE END...





YOU KNOW, THEY FLY BETTER WHEN YOU MAKE THEM INTO AIRPLANES!

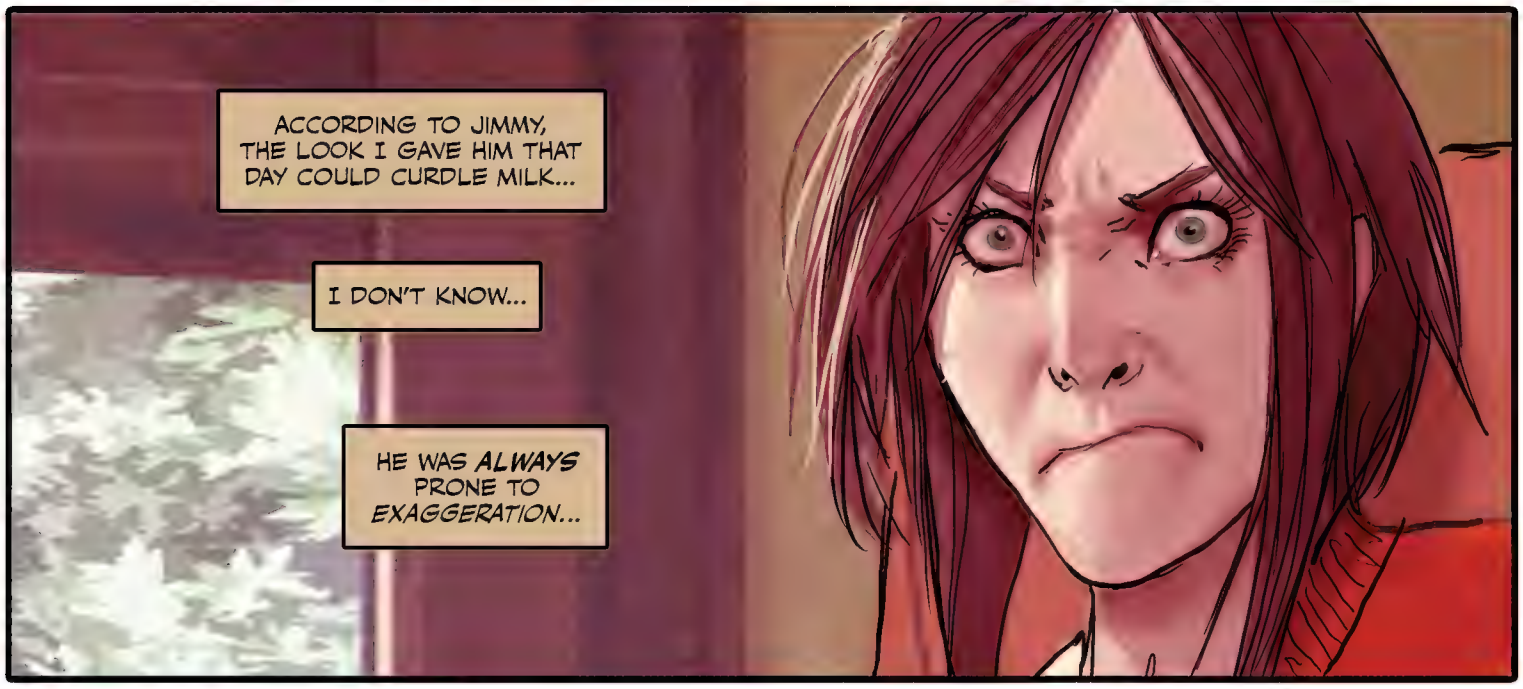
LEAVE IT THERE, JIMMY!!!

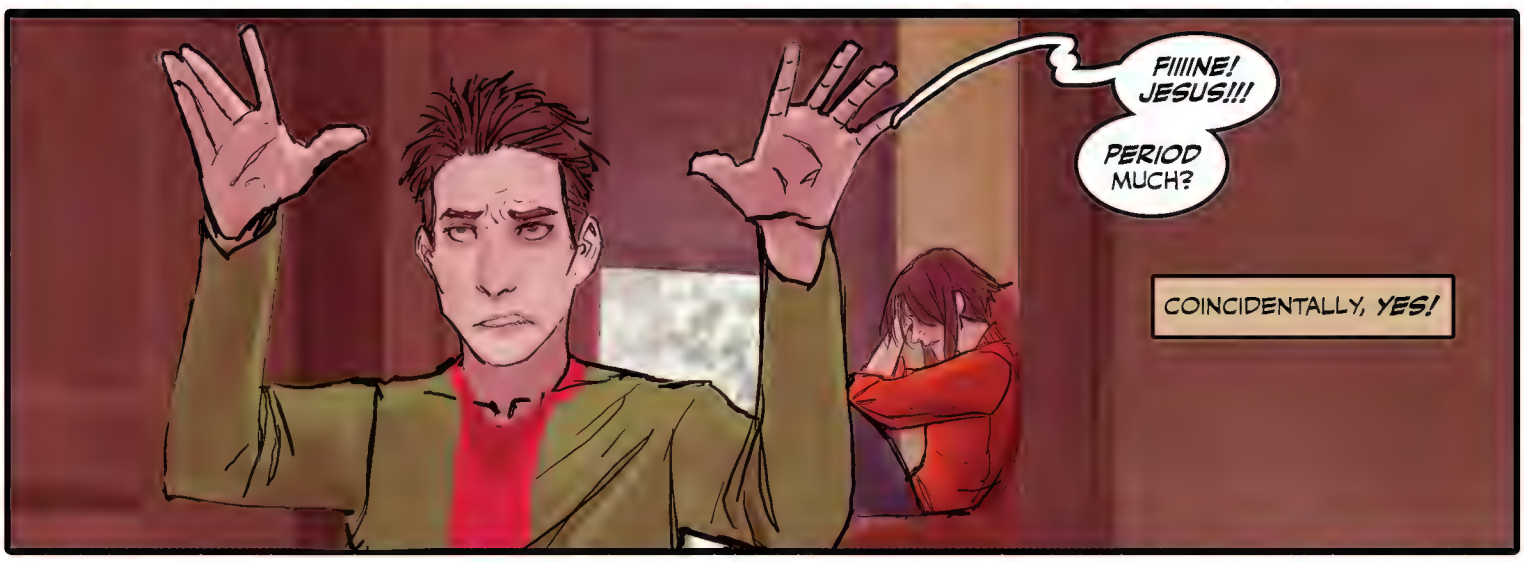
FINE! JEESH!
I JUST CAME TO ASK YOU SOMETHING, BUT IF YOU'RE GONNA BE LIKE THAT...
WHAT IS IT?

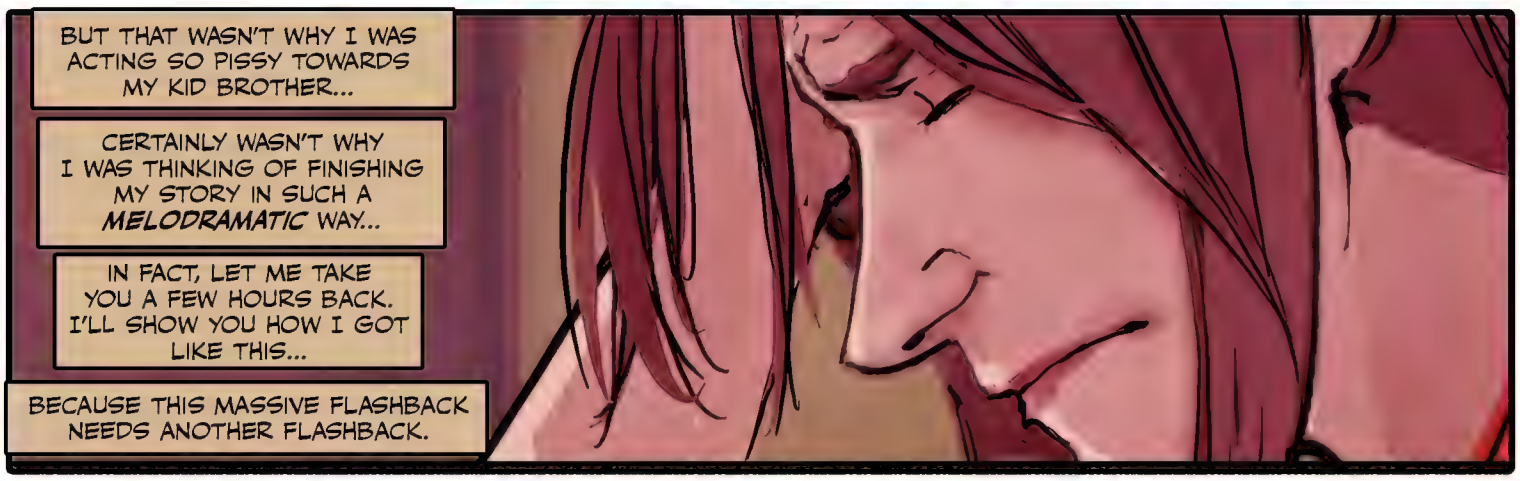
WELL, UMM, YOU SAID YOU WOULD STAY HERE FOR A FEW DAYS, SO I WAS THINKING...

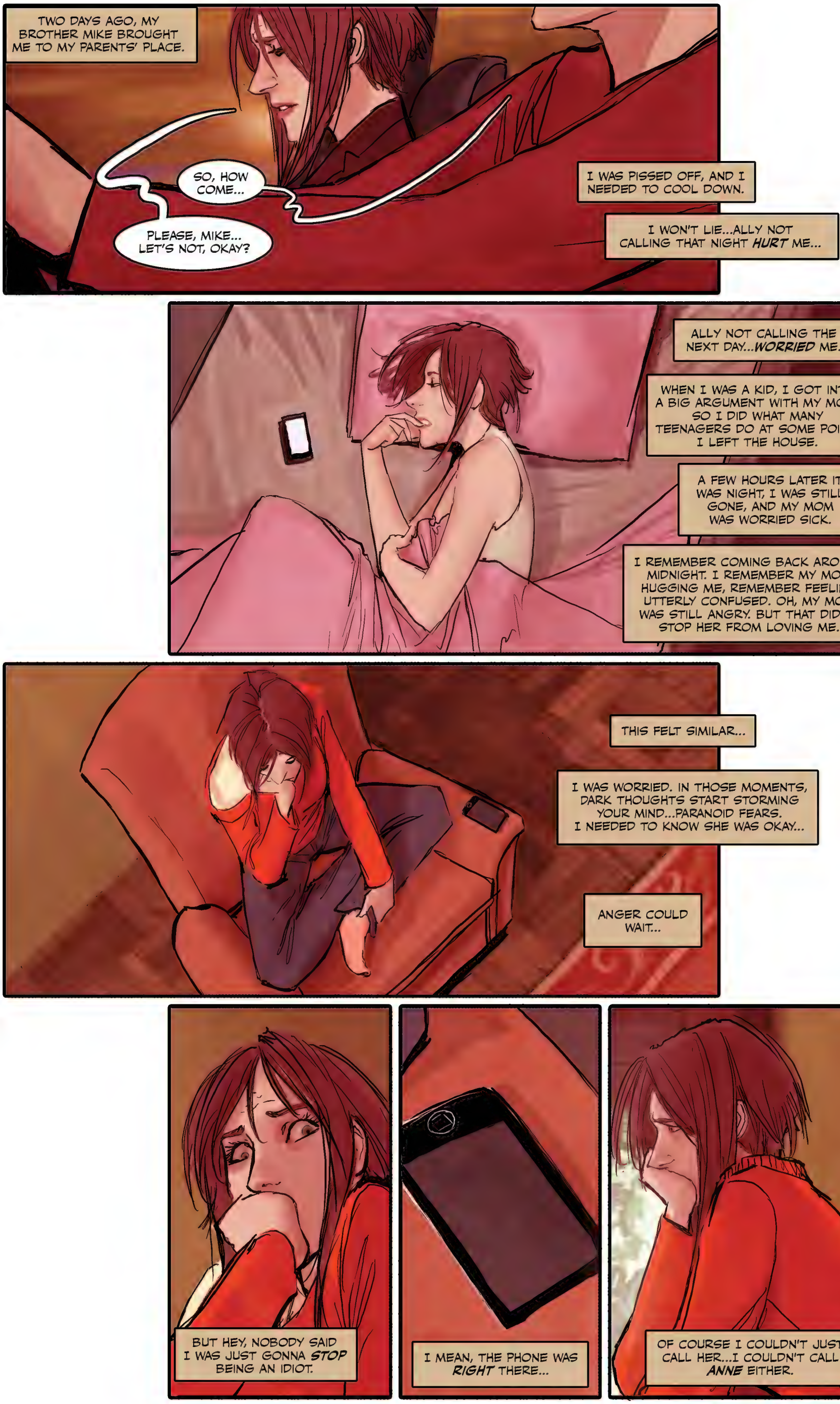
SPIT IT OUT!

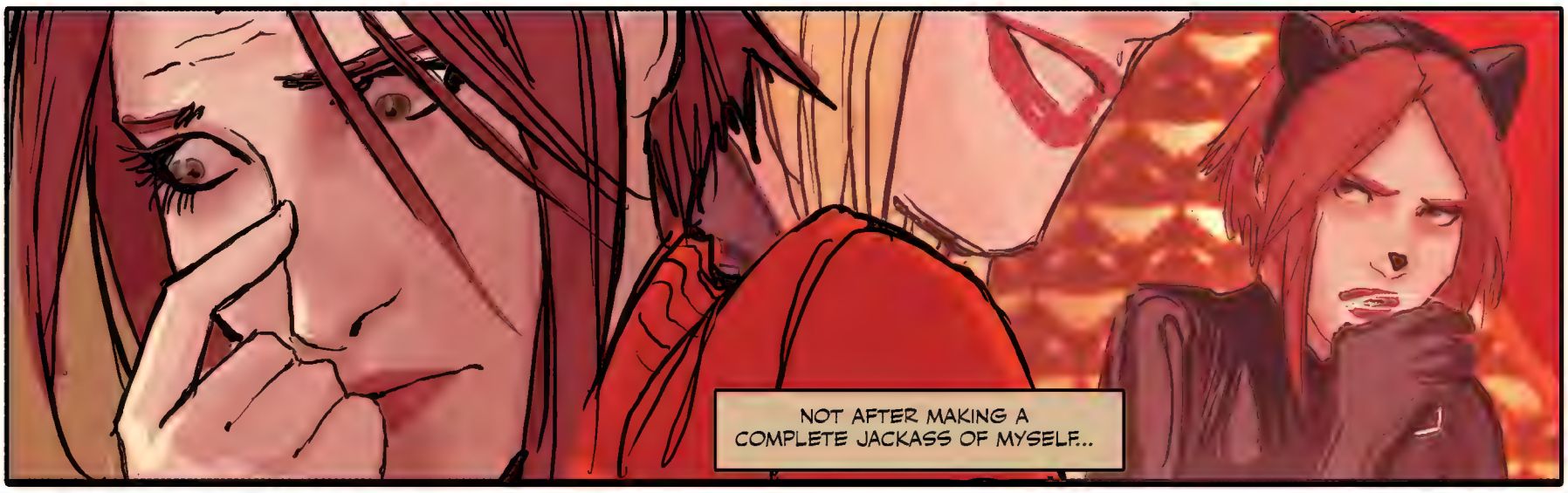
YOU WANNA INVITE YOUR FRIEND *ALLISON* OVER? I'M SURE MOM WOULD...


ACCORDING TO JIMMY, THE LOOK I GAVE HIM THAT DAY COULD CURDLE MILK...
I DON'T KNOW...
HE WAS *ALWAYS* PRONE TO *EXAGGERATION*...

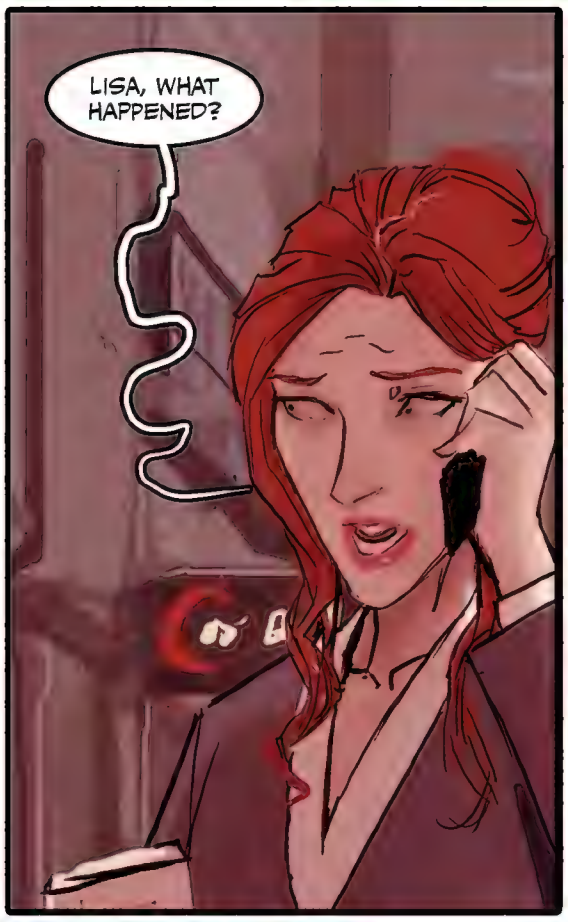

FIIIINE! JESUS!!!
PERIOD MUCH?
COINCIDENTALLY, *YES!*


BUT THAT WASN'T WHY I WAS ACTING SO PISSY TOWARDS MY KID BROTHER...
CERTAINLY WASN'T WHY I WAS THINKING OF FINISHING MY STORY IN SUCH A *MELODRAMATIC* WAY...
IN FACT, LET ME TAKE YOU A FEW HOURS BACK. I'LL SHOW YOU HOW I GOT LIKE THIS...
BECAUSE THIS MASSIVE FLASHBACK NEEDS ANOTHER FLASHBACK.


TWO DAYS AGO, MY BROTHER MIKE BROUGHT ME TO MY PARENTS' PLACE.
SO, HOW COME...
PLEASE, MIKE... LET'S NOT, OKAY?
I WAS PISSED OFF, AND I NEEDED TO COOL DOWN.
I WON'T LIE...ALLY NOT CALLING THAT NIGHT *HURT* ME...
ALLY NOT CALLING THE NEXT DAY...*WORRIED* ME.
WHEN I WAS A KID, I GOT INTO A BIG ARGUMENT WITH MY MOM. SO I DID WHAT MANY TEENAGERS DO AT SOME POINT: I LEFT THE HOUSE.
A FEW HOURS LATER IT WAS NIGHT, I WAS STILL GONE, AND MY MOM WAS WORRIED SICK.
I REMEMBER COMING BACK AROUND MIDNIGHT. I REMEMBER MY MOM HUGGING ME, REMEMBER FEELING UTTERLY CONFUSED. OH, MY MOM WAS STILL ANGRY. BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP HER FROM LOVING ME.
THIS FELT SIMILAR...
I WAS WORRIED. IN THOSE MOMENTS, DARK THOUGHTS START STORMING YOUR MIND...PARANOID FEARS. I NEEDED TO KNOW SHE WAS OKAY...
ANGER COULD WAIT...
BUT HEY, NOBODY SAID I WAS JUST GONNA *STOP* BEING AN IDIOT.
I MEAN, THE PHONE WAS *RIGHT* THERE...
OF COURSE I COULDN'T JUST CALL HER...I COULDN'T CALL *ANNE* EITHER.

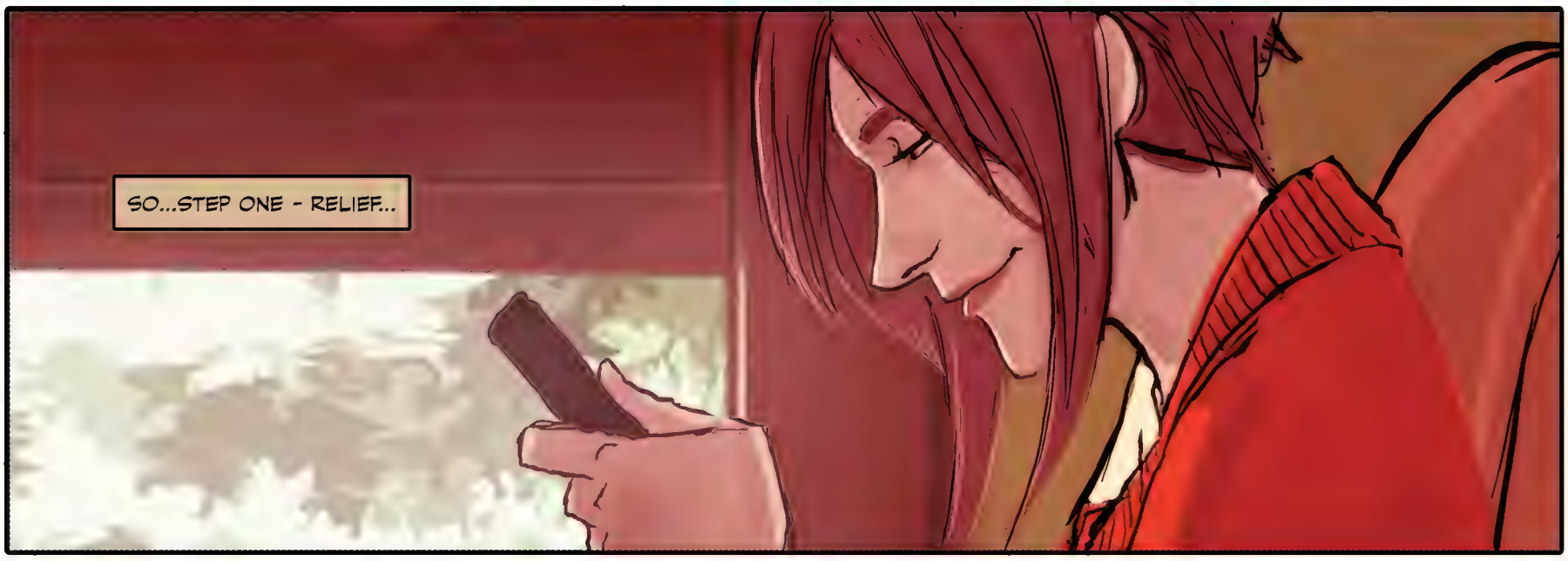

NOT AFTER MAKING A COMPLETE JACKASS OF MYSELF...

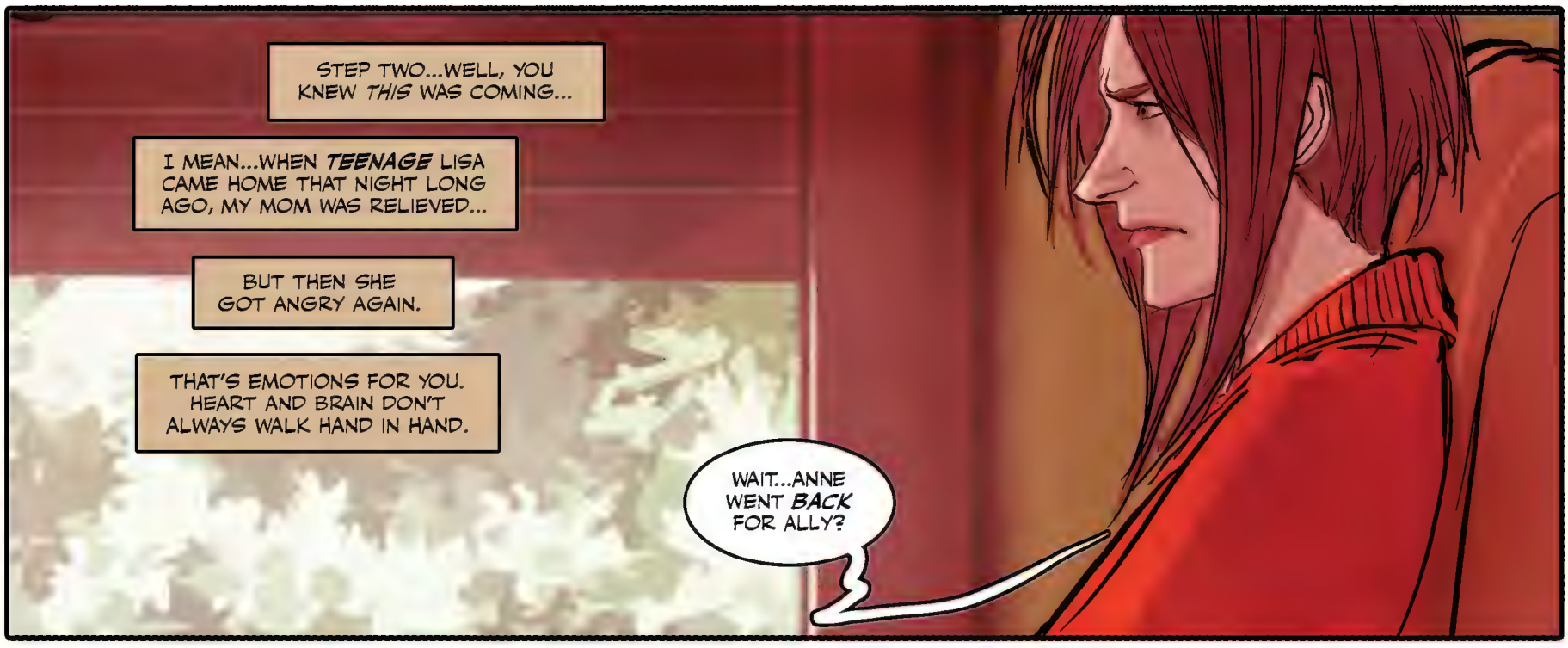
SO I WENT TO THE NEXT BEST SOURCE.
OH YEAH, I MESSAGED ANNE THAT TOM AND I WERE GONNA GIVE YOU A LIFT. SO SHE SAID SHE WAS BRINGING ALLY HOME...
OH...SHE DID?
YEAH.

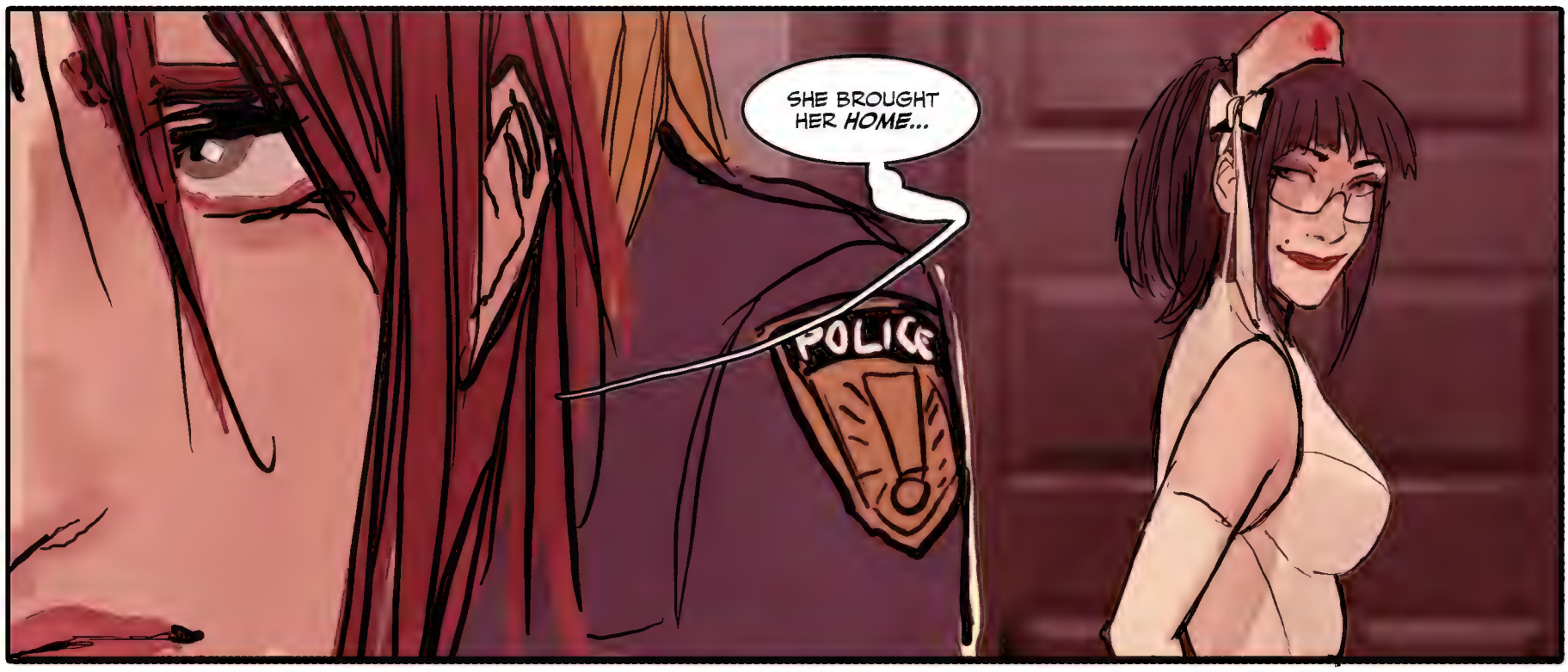

LISA, WHAT HAPPENED?

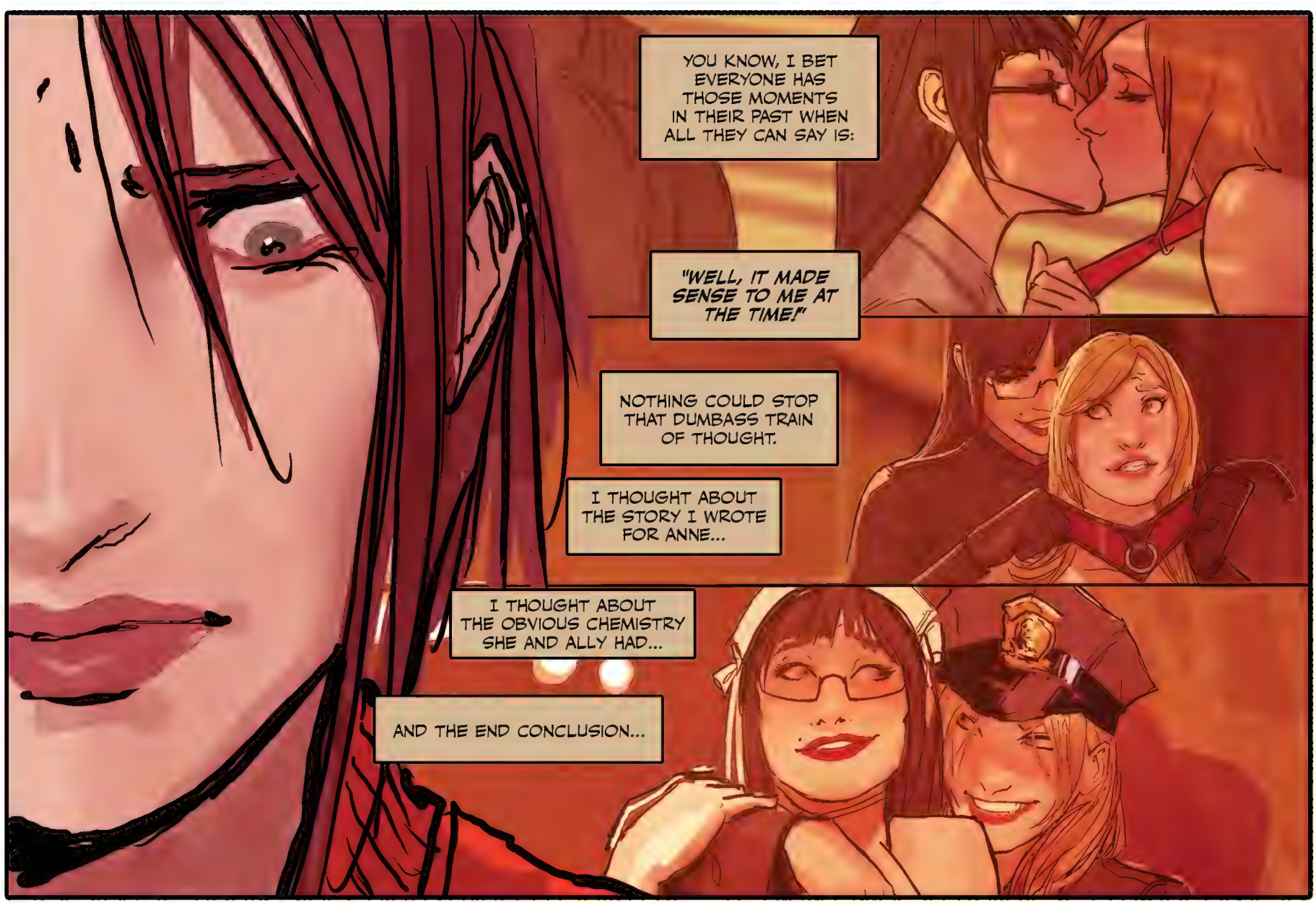
I...DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT NOW, BUT THANK YOU, CASSIE.

ANYTIME... AND WHENEVER YOU WANT TO TALK...
I'LL CALL!


SO...STEP ONE - RELIEF...


STEP TWO...WELL, YOU KNEW *THIS* WAS COMING...
I MEAN...WHEN ***TEENAGE*** LISA CAME HOME THAT NIGHT LONG AGO, MY MOM WAS RELIEVED...
BUT THEN SHE GOT ANGRY AGAIN.
THAT'S EMOTIONS FOR YOU. HEART AND BRAIN DON'T ALWAYS WALK HAND IN HAND.
WAIT...ANNE WENT ***BACK*** FOR ALLY?


SHE BROUGHT HER ***HOME***...
POLICE


YOU KNOW, I BET EVERYONE HAS THOSE MOMENTS IN THEIR PAST WHEN ALL THEY CAN SAY IS:
"WELL, IT MADE SENSE TO ME AT THE TIME!"
NOTHING COULD STOP THAT DUMBASS TRAIN OF THOUGHT.
I THOUGHT ABOUT THE STORY I WROTE FOR ANNE...
I THOUGHT ABOUT THE OBVIOUS CHEMISTRY SHE AND ALLY HAD...
AND THE END CONCLUSION...

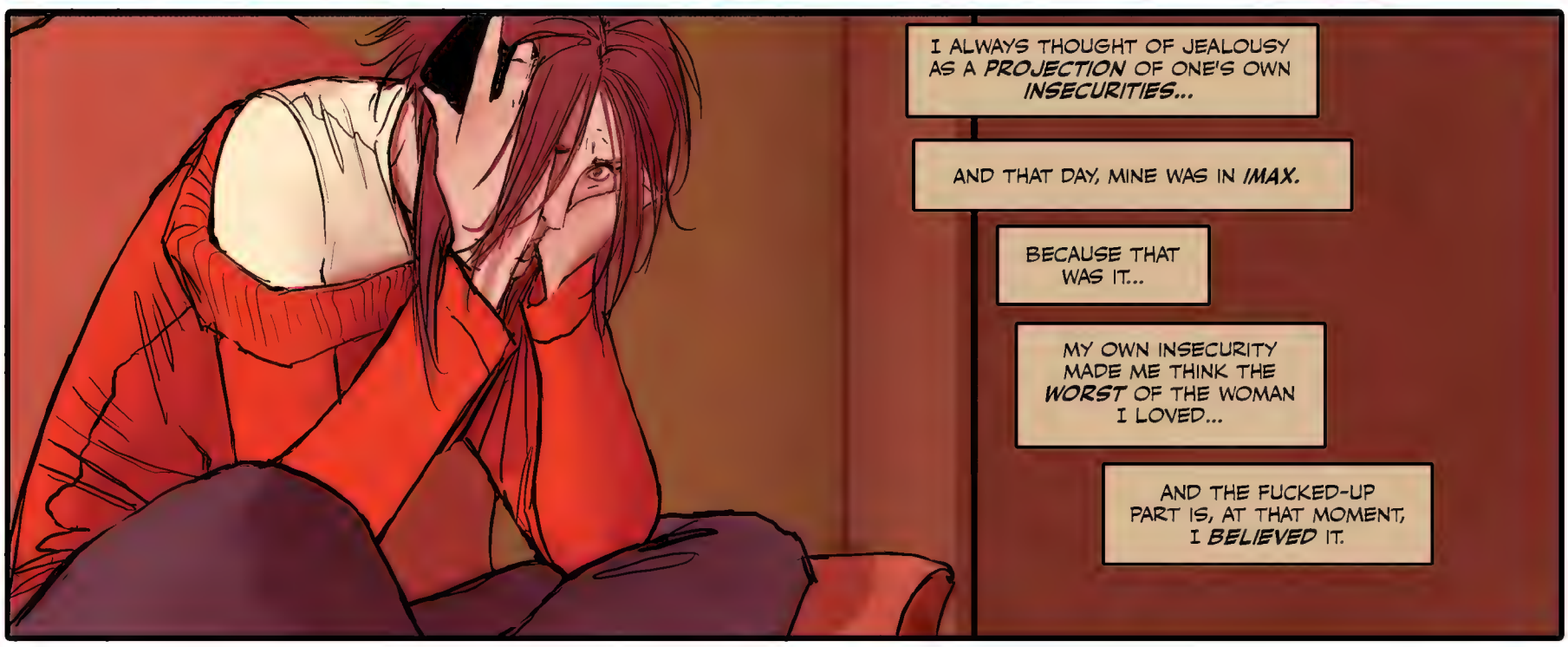
WELL, IT MADE SENSE TO ME AT THE TIME!

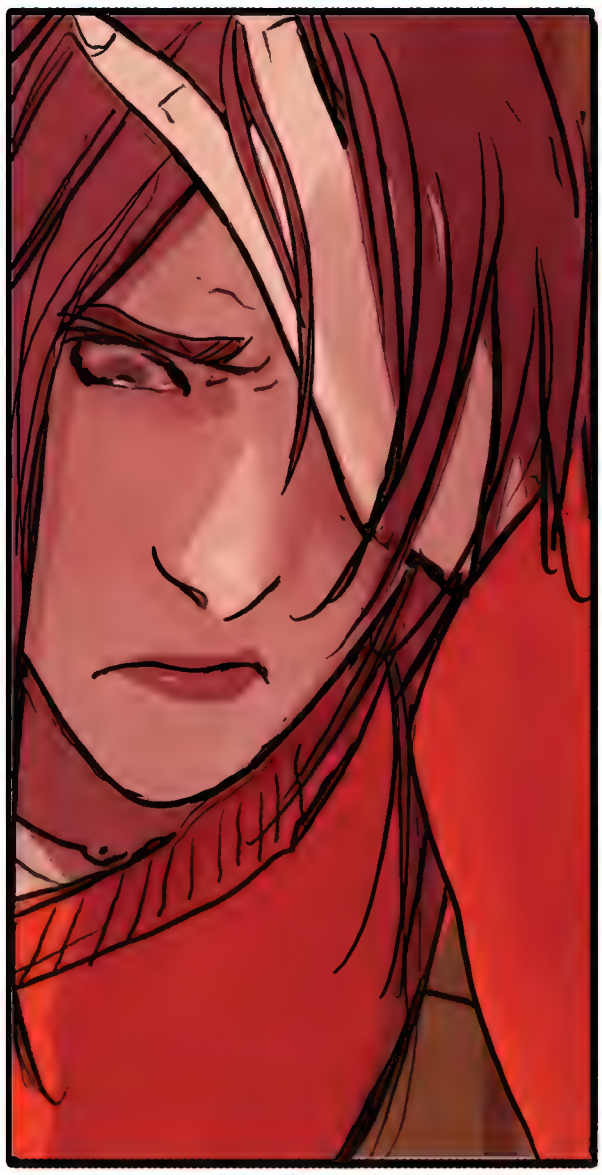
UNDER MY ROOF, I AM THE LAW, AND YOU...

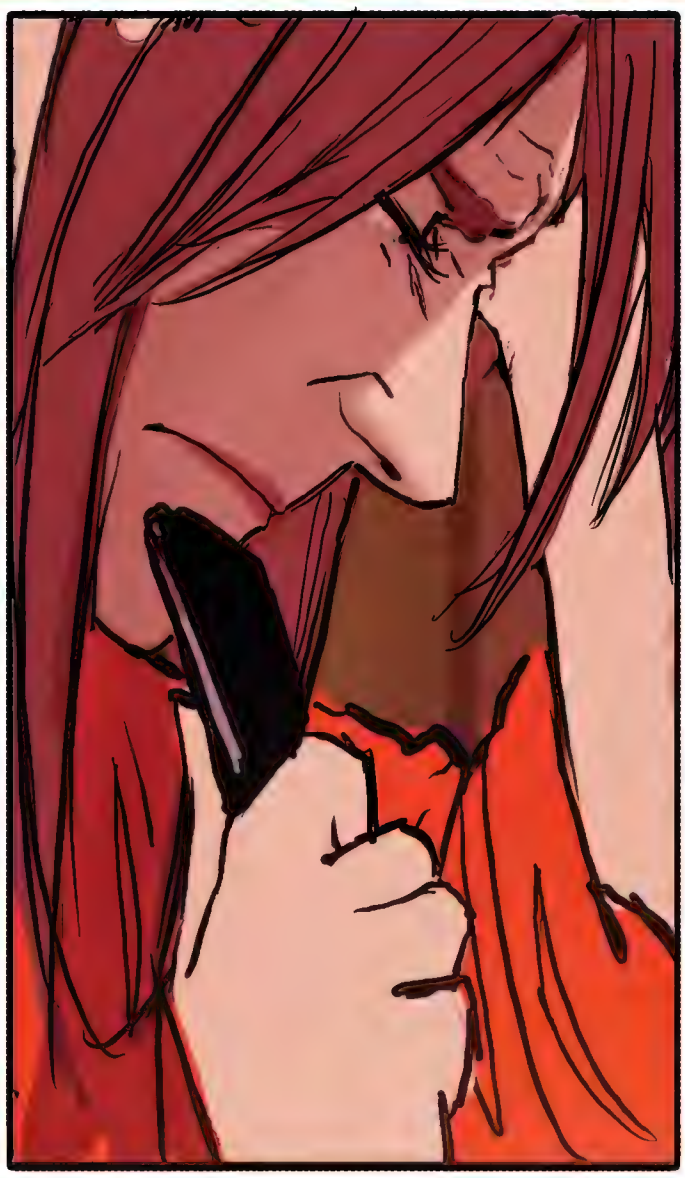
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT!

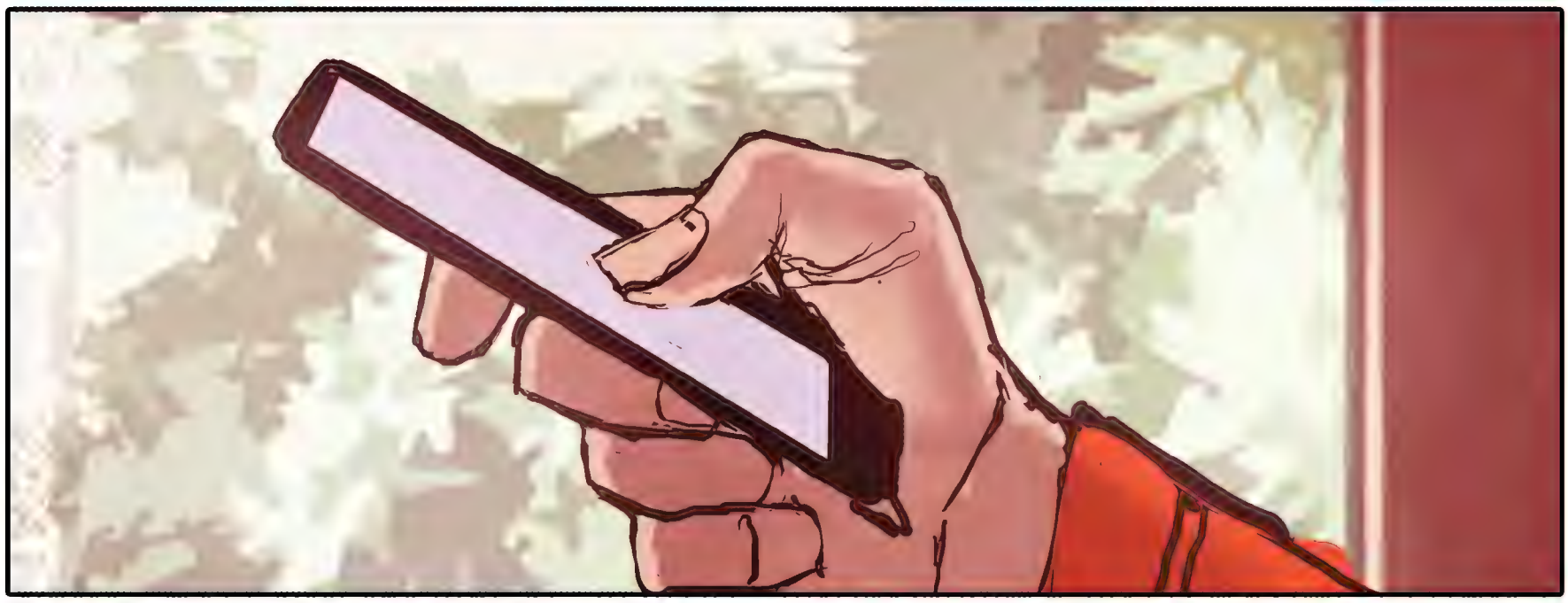
YEAH...

LEAVE IT TO A WRITER'S MIND TO PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER AND COME UP WITH 69.

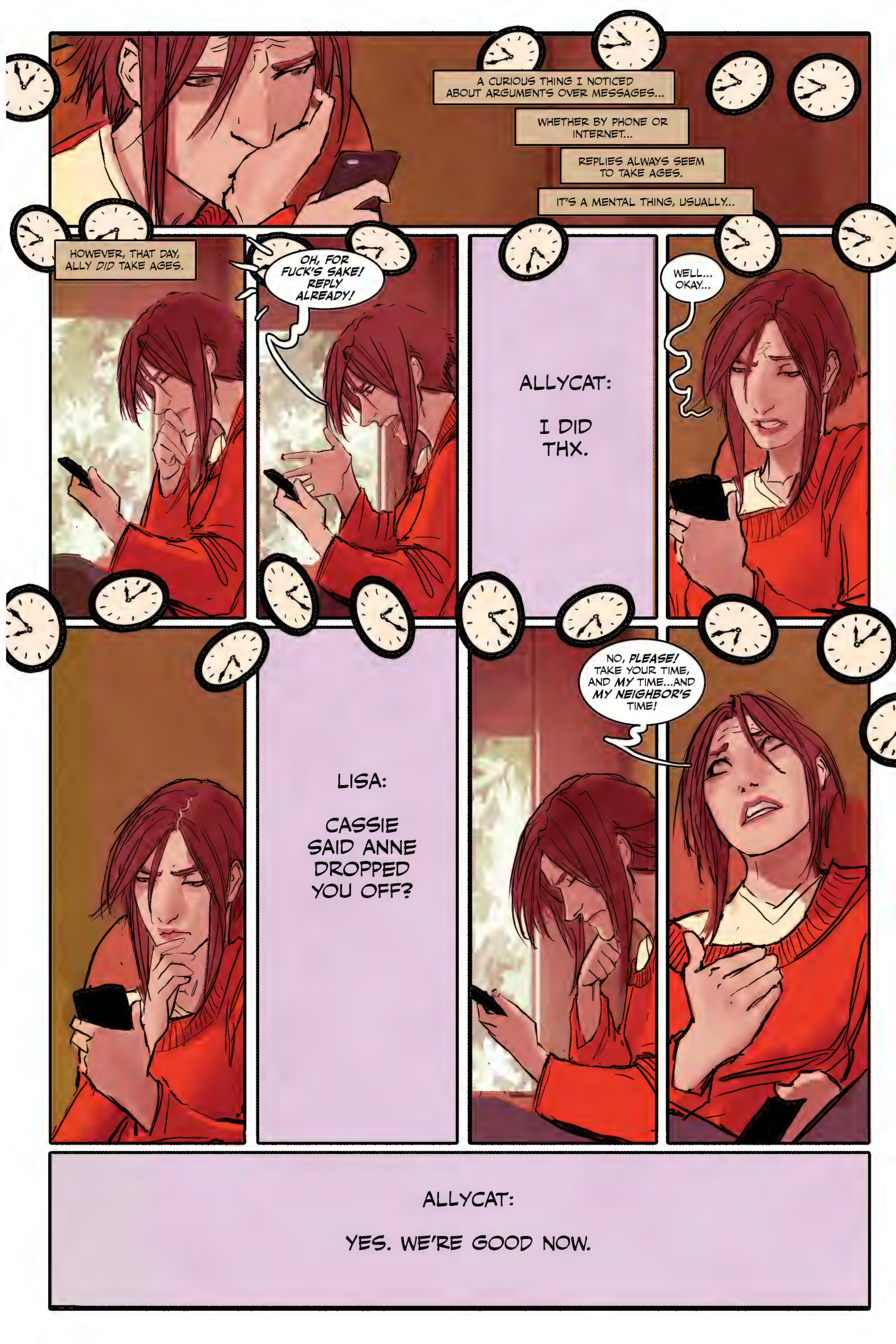








LISA:
JUST CHECKING IF YOU GOT HOME ALL RIGHT?

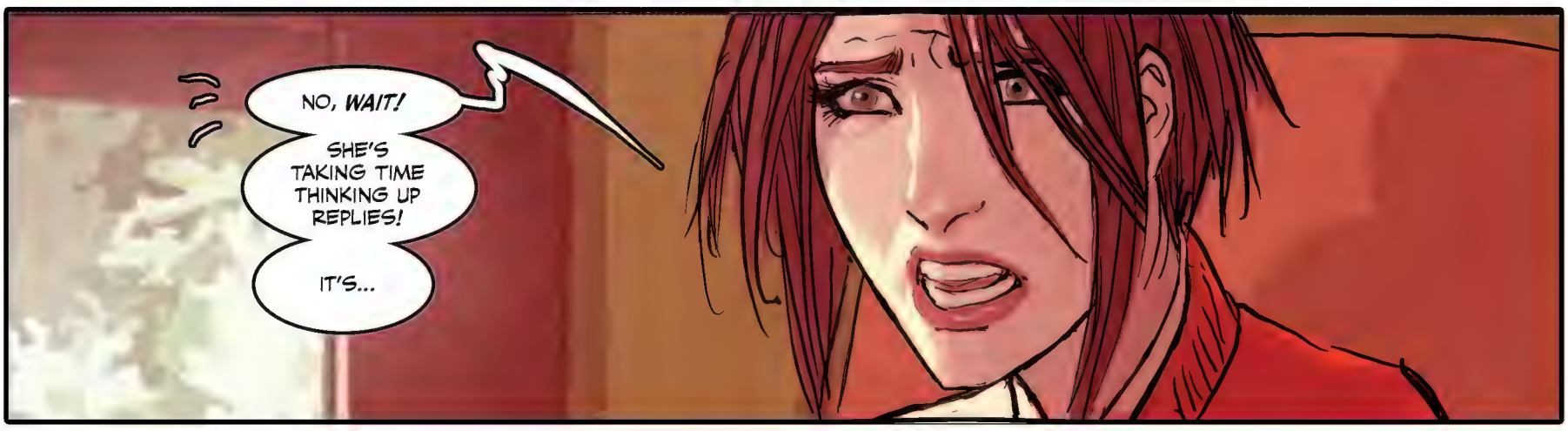

A CURIOUS THING I NOTICED ABOUT ARGUMENTS OVER MESSAGES...
WHETHER BY PHONE OR INTERNET...
REPLIES ALWAYS SEEM TO TAKE AGES.
IT'S A MENTAL THING, USUALLY...
HOWEVER, THAT DAY, ALLY DID TAKE AGES.
OH, FOR FUCK'S SAKE! REPLY ALREADY!
ALLYCAT: I DID THX.
WELL... OKAY...
LISA: CASSIE SAID ANNE DROPPED YOU OFF?
NO, PLEASE! TAKE YOUR TIME, AND MY TIME...AND MY NEIGHBOR'S TIME!
ALLYCAT: YES. WE'RE GOOD NOW.

LISA:

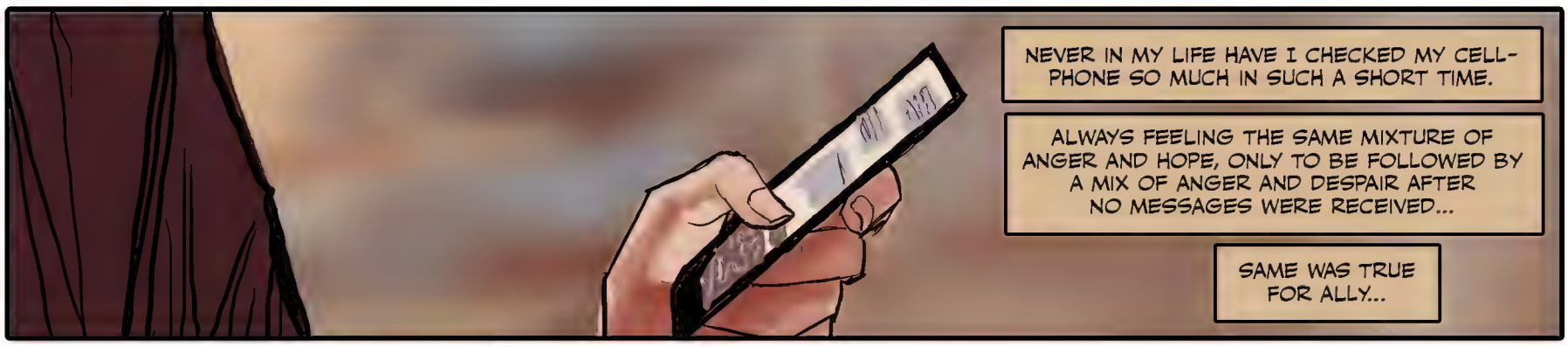
OKAY, JUST MAKING SURE.

ALLYCAT:

THANK YOU.

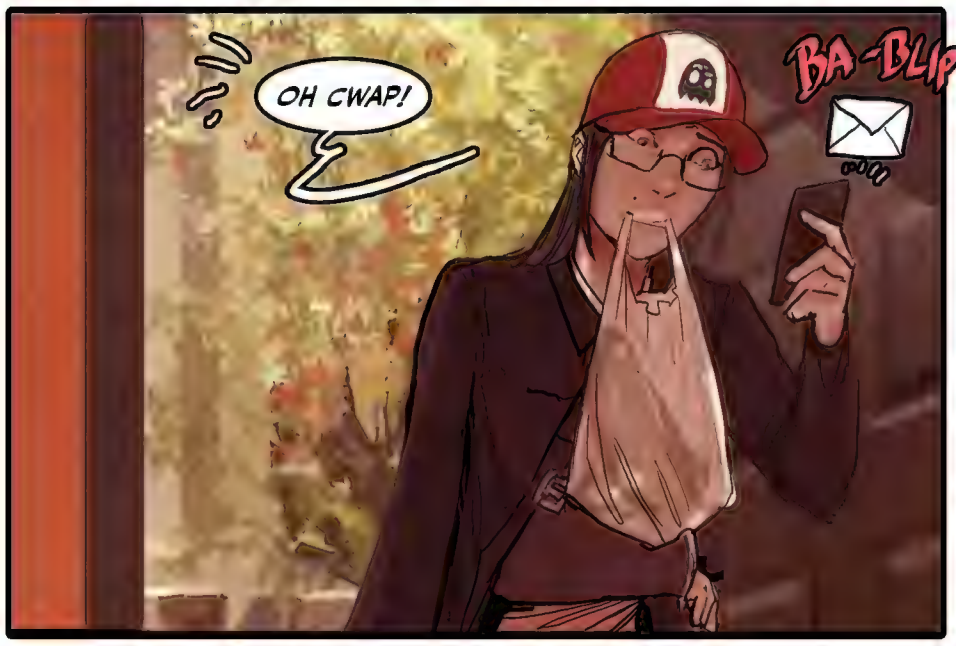


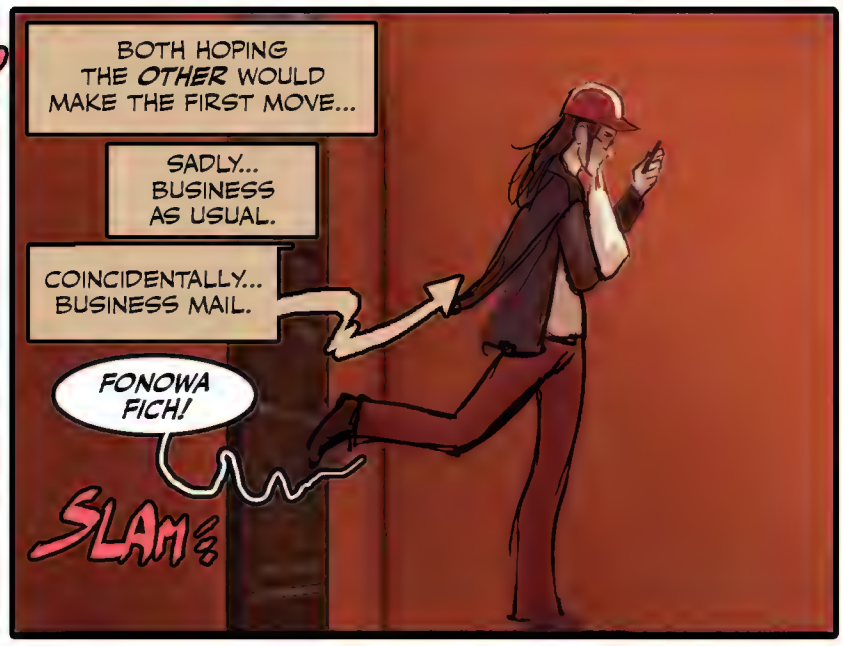
SHE'S... LYING.
YES...I WAS BEING A MORON.
TRUTH WAS, ALLY'S RESPONSES TOOK LONGER THAN USUAL BECAUSE...
WELL...
AARRGGHH!!!
DAMN IT, TYPE RIGHT, YOU PATHETIC EXCUSE FOR A THUMB!!!
ON HER PHONE, SHE COULDN'T TYPE FOR SHIT WITH HER LEFT HAND.

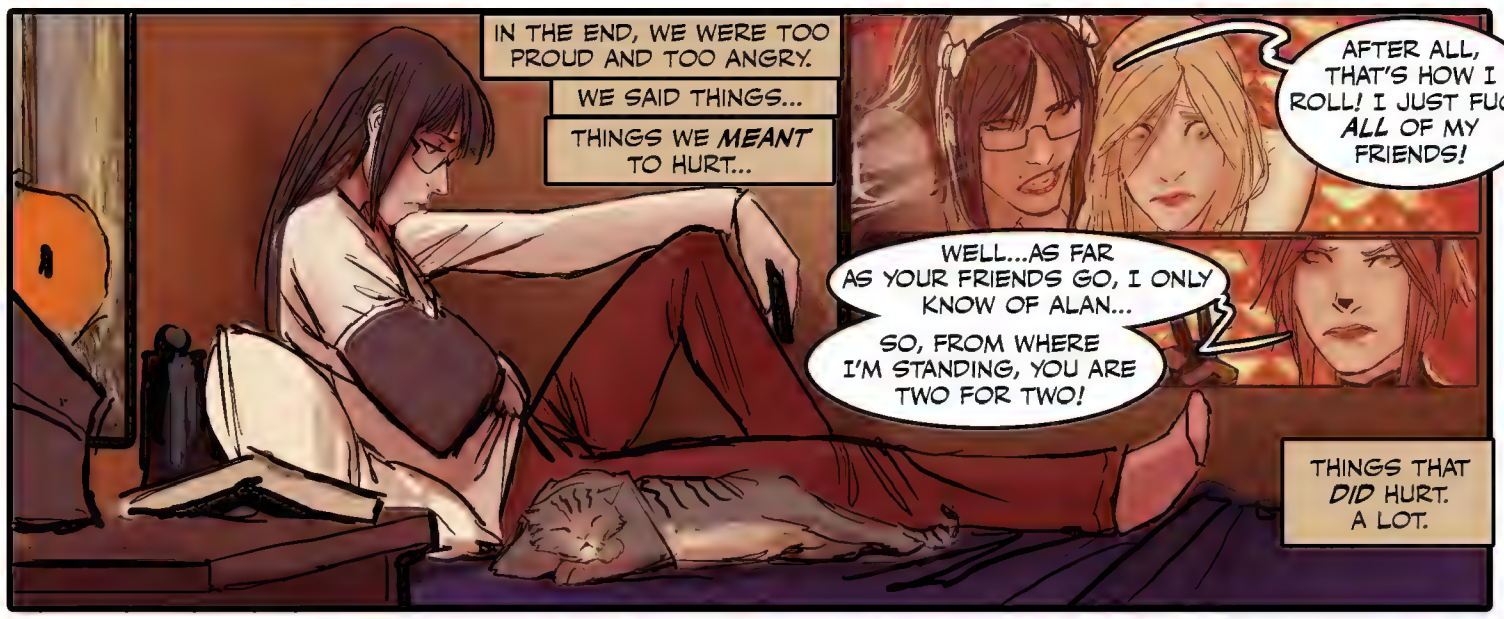

NEVER IN MY LIFE HAVE I CHECKED MY CELL-PHONE SO MUCH IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.
ALWAYS FEELING THE SAME MIXTURE OF ANGER AND HOPE, ONLY TO BE FOLLOWED BY A MIX OF ANGER AND DESPAIR AFTER NO MESSAGES WERE RECEIVED...
SAME WAS TRUE FOR ALLY...

EXCUSE ME!
YOUR BAG!
HUH?
OH...UMM, YEAH, SORRY! THANK YOU!

WE BOTH KEPT OBSESSIVELY GLANCING AT OUR SCREENS, HALF HOPING WE JUST MISSED THE NOTICE...


OH CWAP!
BA-BLIP


BOTH HOPING THE *OTHER* WOULD MAKE THE FIRST MOVE...
SADLY... BUSINESS AS USUAL.
COINCIDENTALLY... BUSINESS MAIL.
FONOWA FICH!
SLAM!

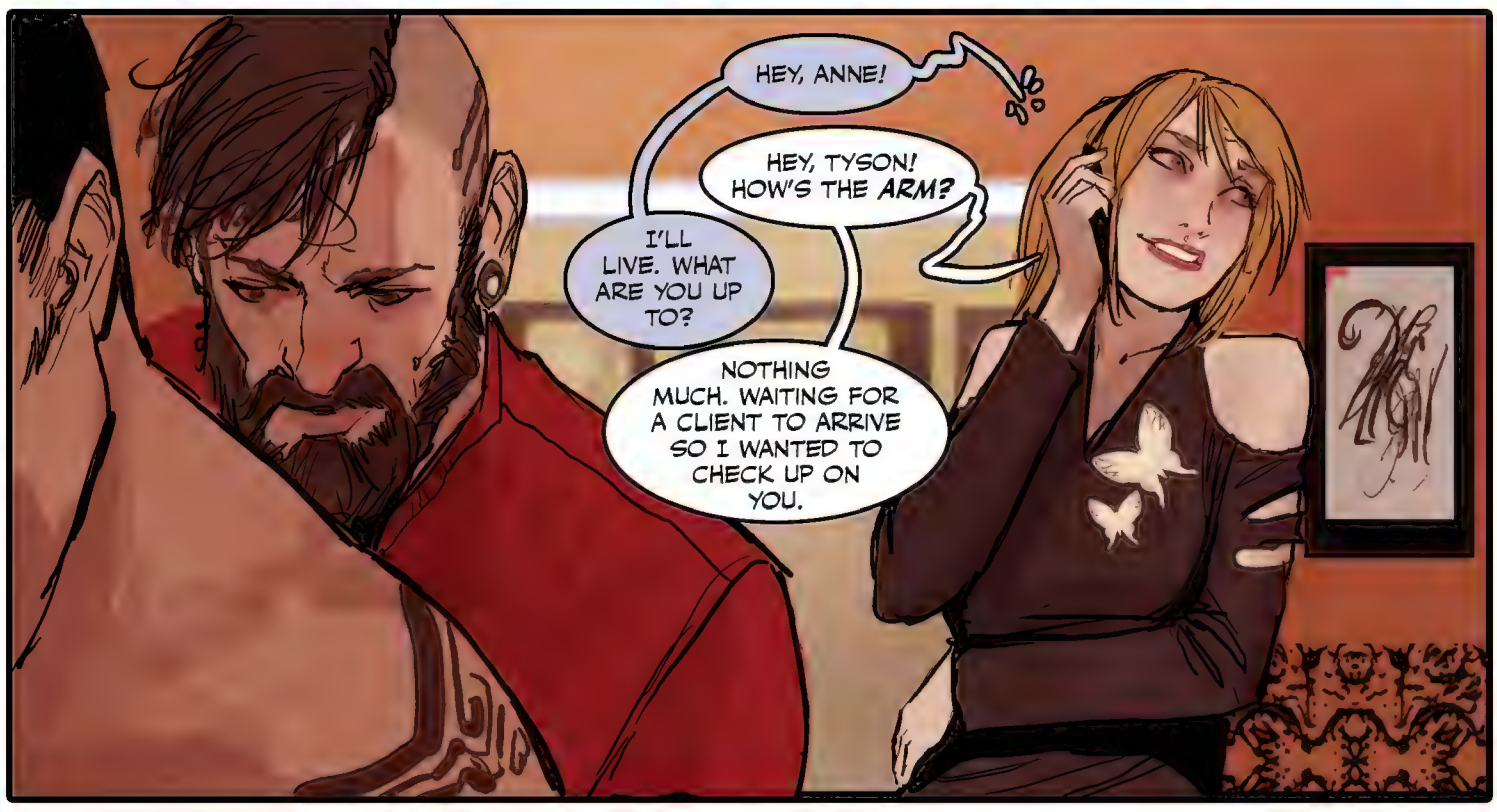

IN THE END, WE WERE TOO PROUD AND TOO ANGRY.
WE SAID THINGS...
THINGS WE MEANT TO HURT...
AFTER ALL, THAT'S HOW I ROLL! I JUST FUCK ALL OF MY FRIENDS!
WELL...AS FAR AS YOUR FRIENDS GO, I ONLY KNOW OF ALAN...
SO, FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, YOU ARE TWO FOR TWO!
THINGS THAT DID HURT. A LOT.

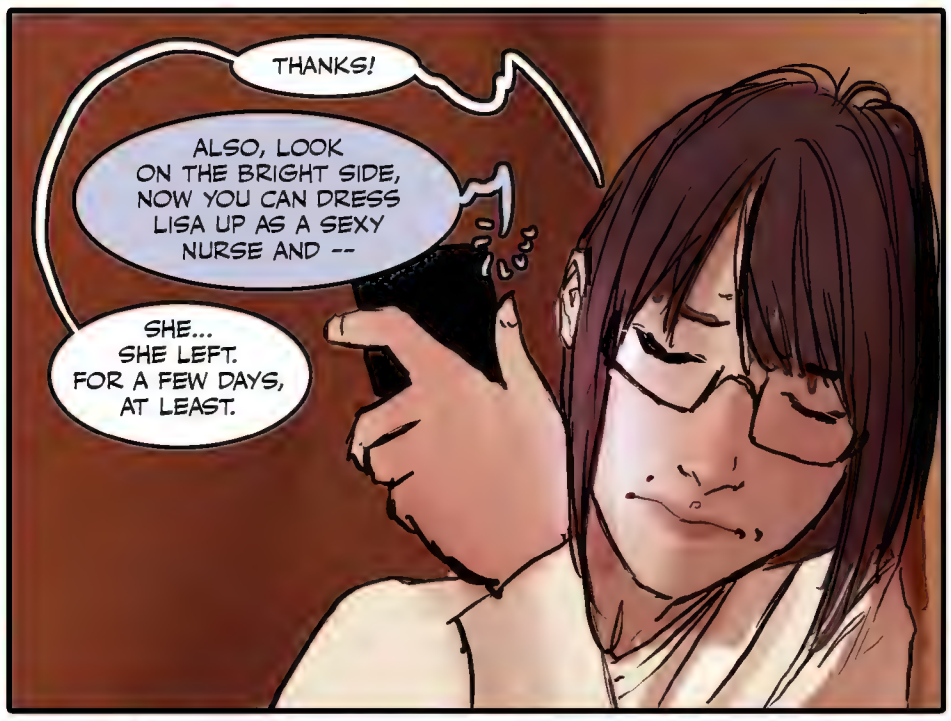
OUR WORDS REFLECTED OUR OWN FEARS.
ALLY'S FEAR THAT AFTER ALL HER SIGNALS, I STILL SAW IN HER JUST A FRIEND. JUST LIKE ALAN WAS...
I SHARED THE SAME FEAR. AND YET, THERE WAS MORE TO IT...I FELT... I DON'T KNOW, REPLACEABLE.
I MEAN, I KNEW THAT ALLY COULD TAKE UP ANY SUB...

AND THAT SCARED ME.
WAH!
BALALEEP

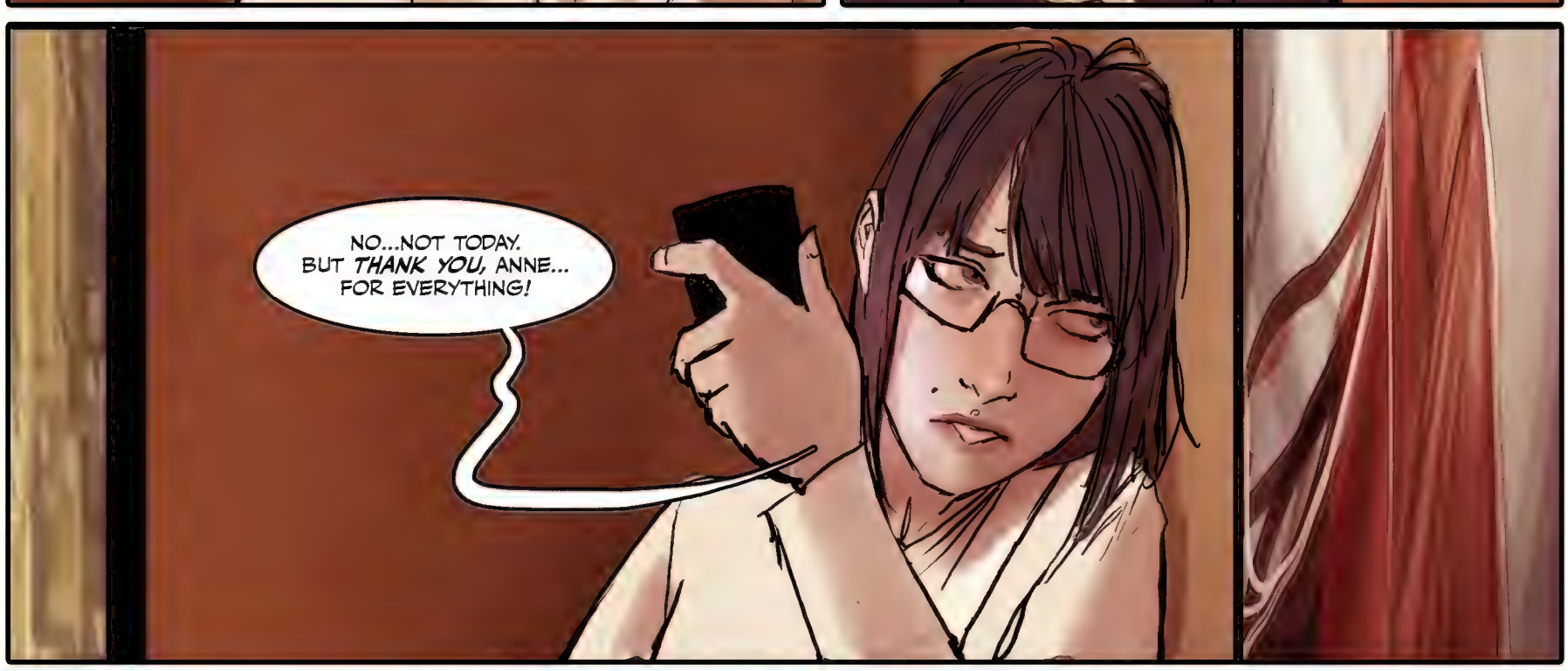
OH...
BALALEEP

SIGH...
BALALEEP


HEY, ANNE!
HEY, TYSON! HOW'S THE ARM?
I'LL LIVE. WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
NOTHING MUCH. WAITING FOR A CLIENT TO ARRIVE SO I WANTED TO CHECK UP ON YOU.


THANKS!
ALSO, LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, NOW YOU CAN DRESS LISA UP AS A SEXY NURSE AND --
SHE... SHE LEFT. FOR A FEW DAYS, AT LEAST.

OH...UMM, CRAP...
I...UHH...YOU NEED SOME COMPANY?
OR...I DON'T KNOW...


NO...NOT TODAY. BUT *THANK YOU,* ANNE... FOR EVERYTHING!

DON'T MENTION IT...
IF YOU NEED *ANYTHING*...JUST *CALL* ME, OKAY?

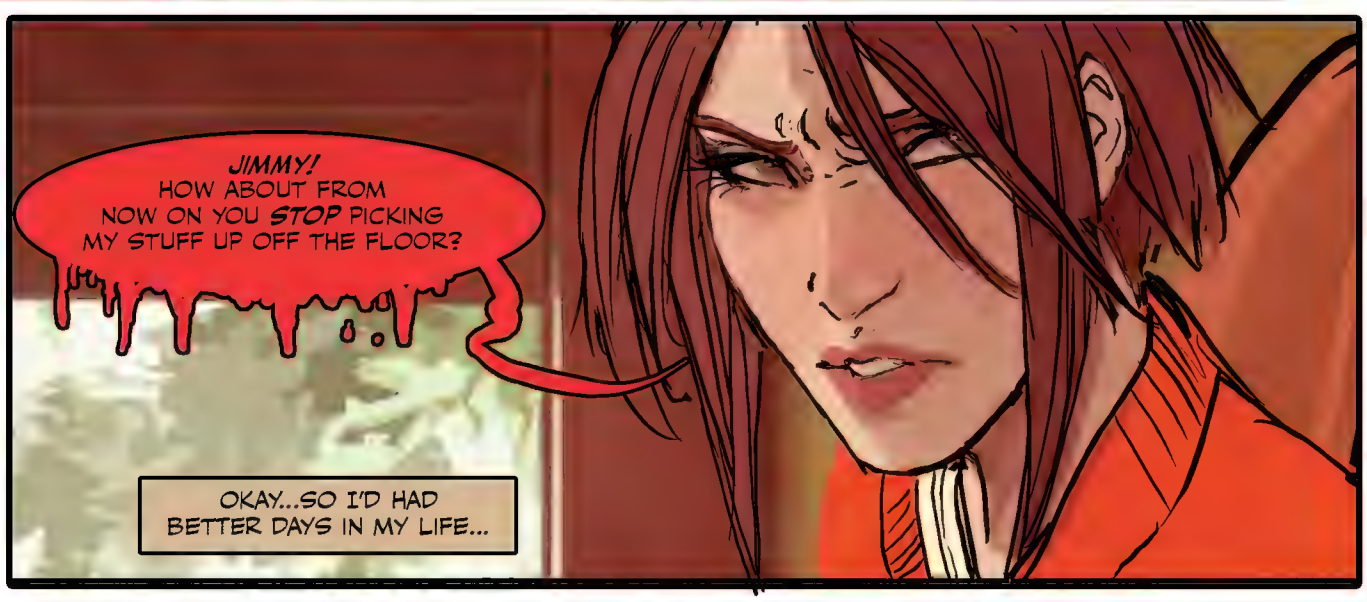
WILL DO.

ALLY LIKED ANNE JUST FINE.
BUT SHE WAS HURT.
THAT DAY SHE NEEDED THE COMPANY AND COMFORT OF A FAR MORE...*BIASED* FRIEND.
YEAH...

FUCK THIS!
AND *FUCK* CELLPHONES!

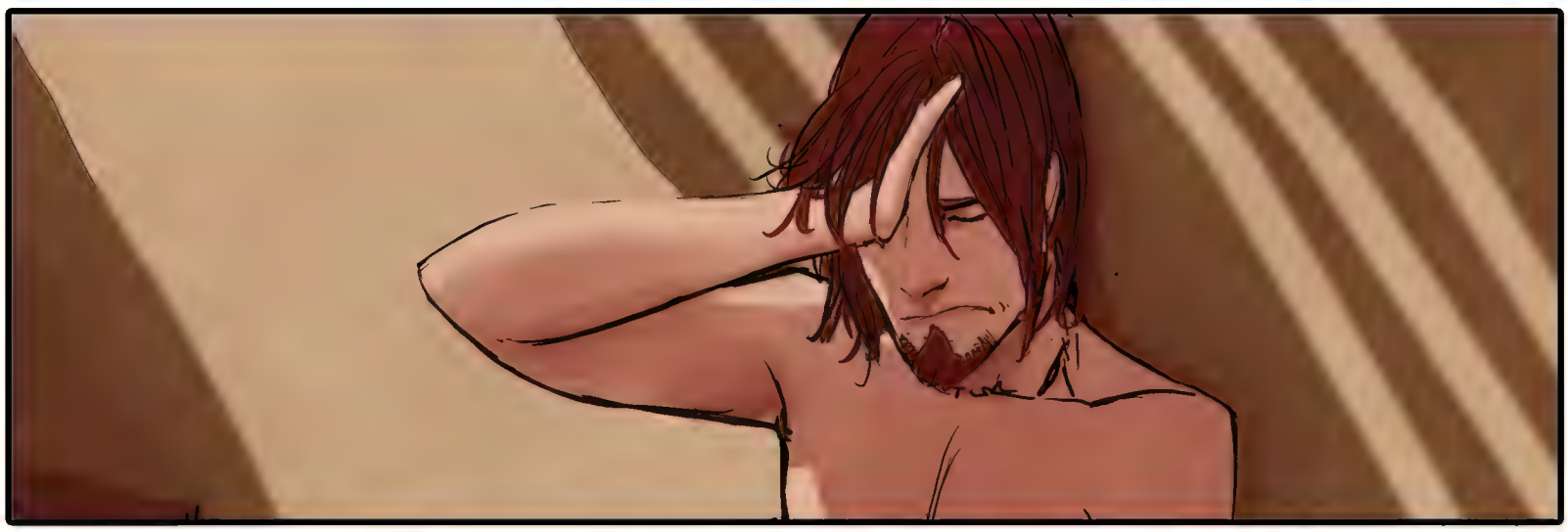
BONKERS!
NO!

LISA? THIS YOUR CELLPHONE?
I FOUND IT ON THE FLO --


JIMMY! HOW ABOUT FROM NOW ON YOU *STOP* PICKING MY STUFF UP OFF THE FLOOR?
OKAY...SO I'D HAD BETTER DAYS IN MY LIFE...

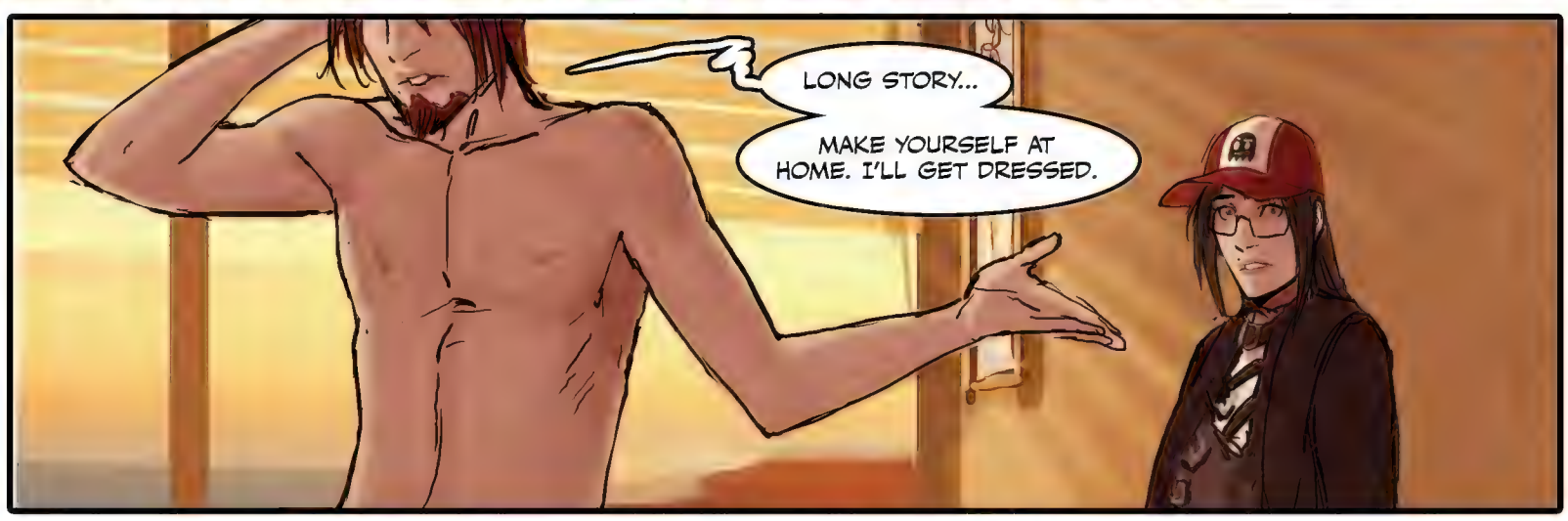
WHAT DO *YOU* WANT?

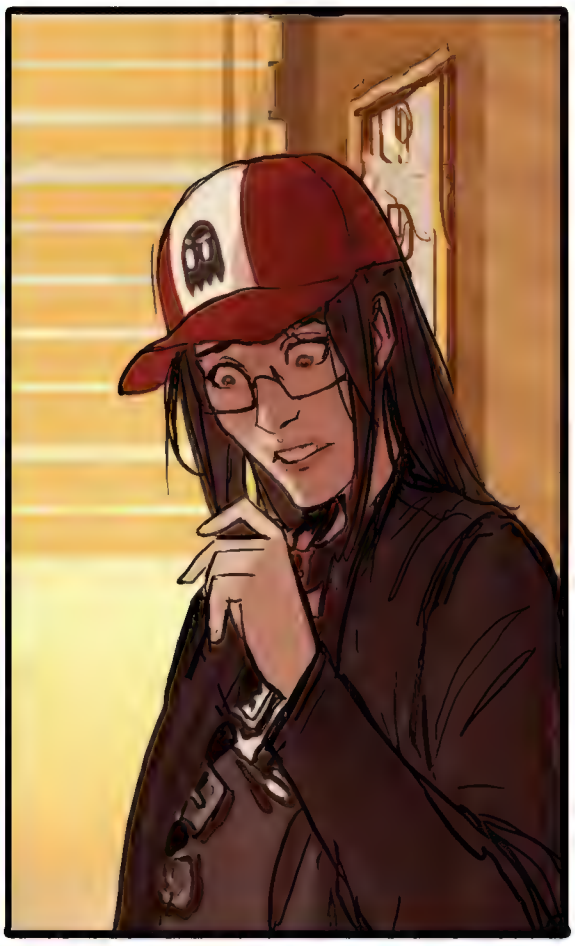
THEN AGAIN... SO HAD *ALAN*...



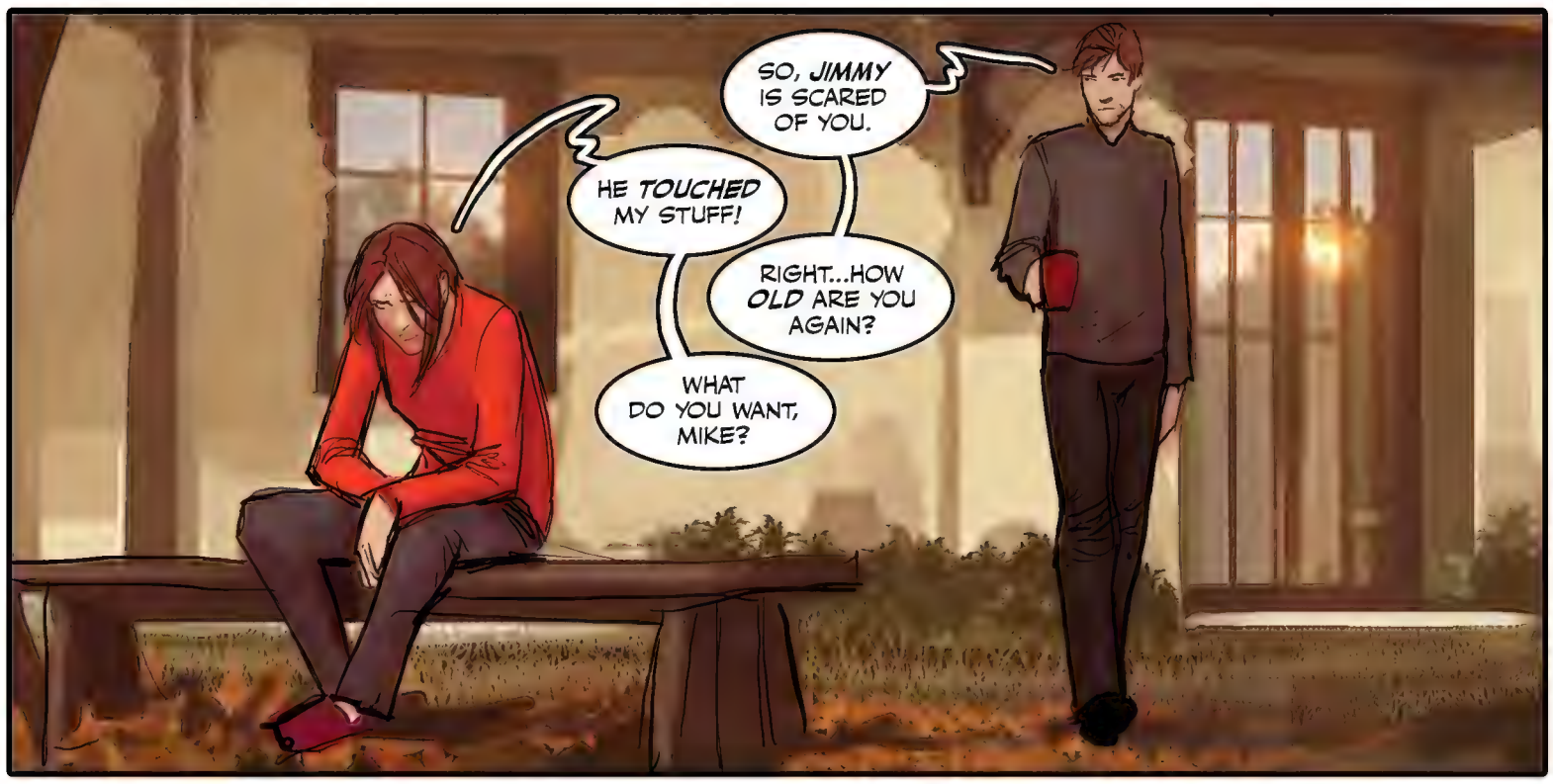
WHAT'S WITH THE ARM?

ARM!? WHAT'S WITH... EVERYTHING?


LONG STORY...
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME. I'LL GET DRESSED.



YOU WANT COFFEE?
HUH? OH, YEAH, SURE!


SO, JIMMY IS SCARED OF YOU.
HE TOUCHED MY STUFF!
RIGHT...HOW OLD ARE YOU AGAIN?
WHAT DO YOU WANT, MIKE?

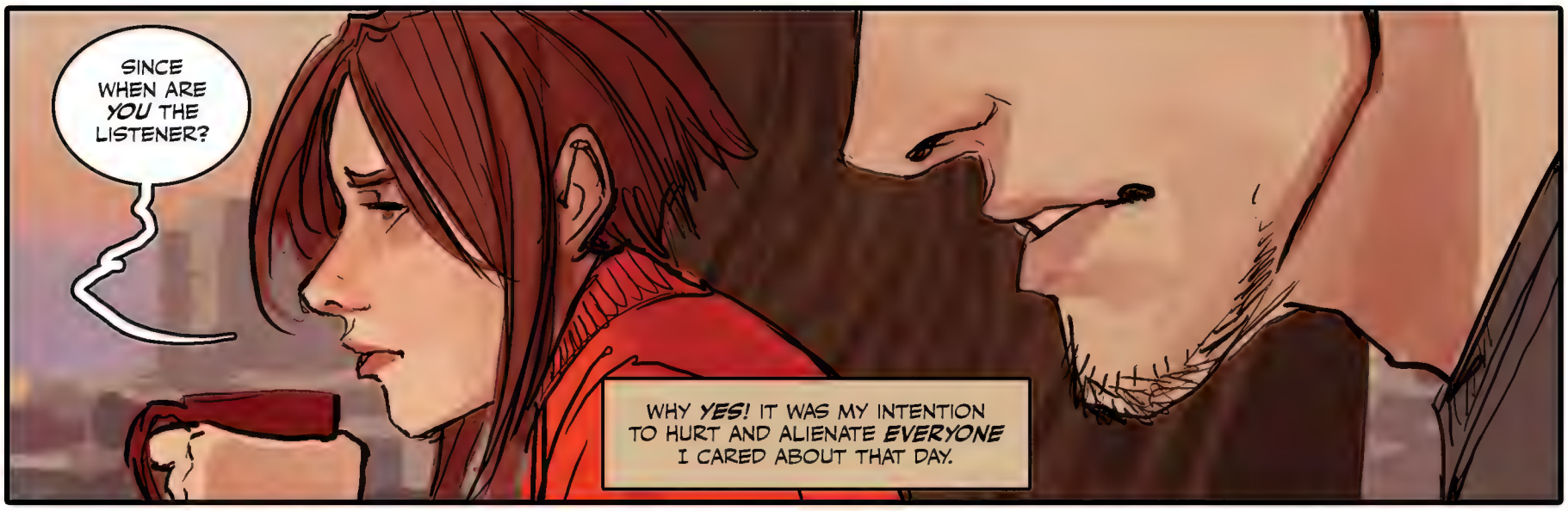
ME? NOTHING! YOU SEEM LIKE YOU COULD USE A CUP OF TEA.
AWWW... NO, REALLY! WHAT DO YOU WANT?

HEH...
I DON'T KNOW...
KINDA HOPED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME STUFF...

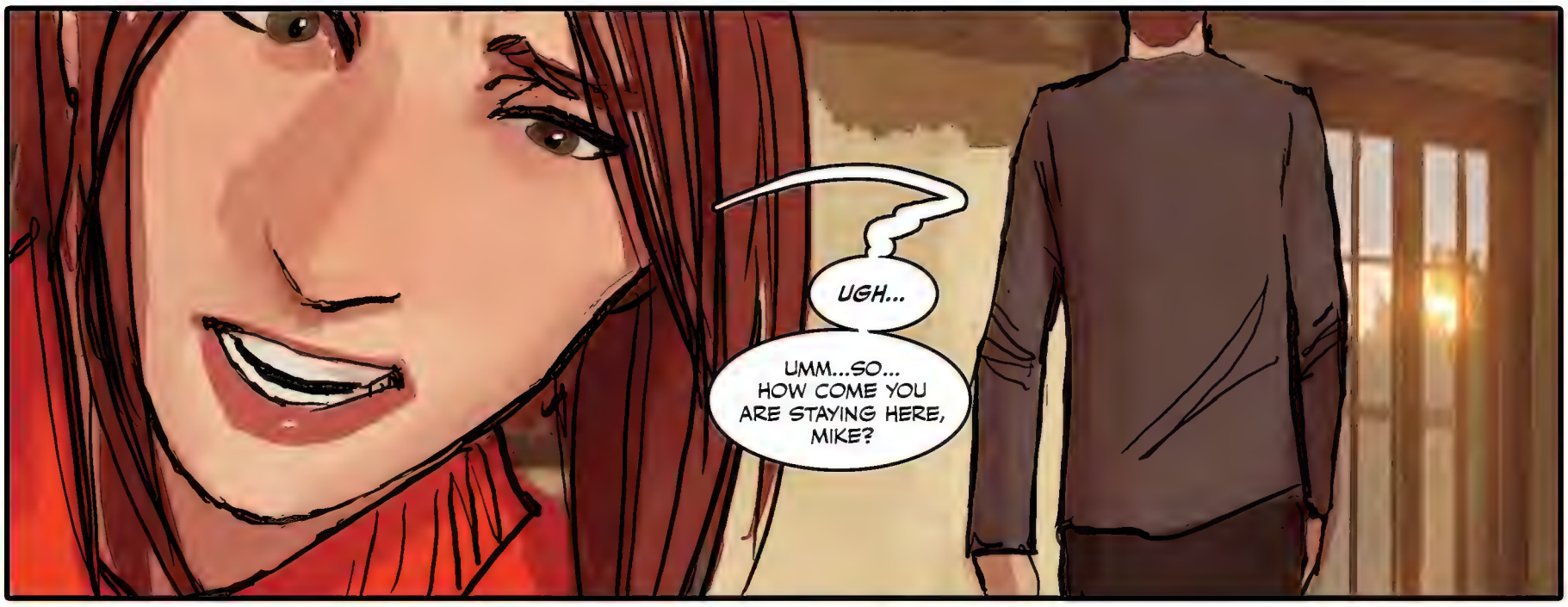
IF IT'S RELATIONSHIP STUFF, WE ARE CLOSED DUE TO LACK OF EXPERTISE!

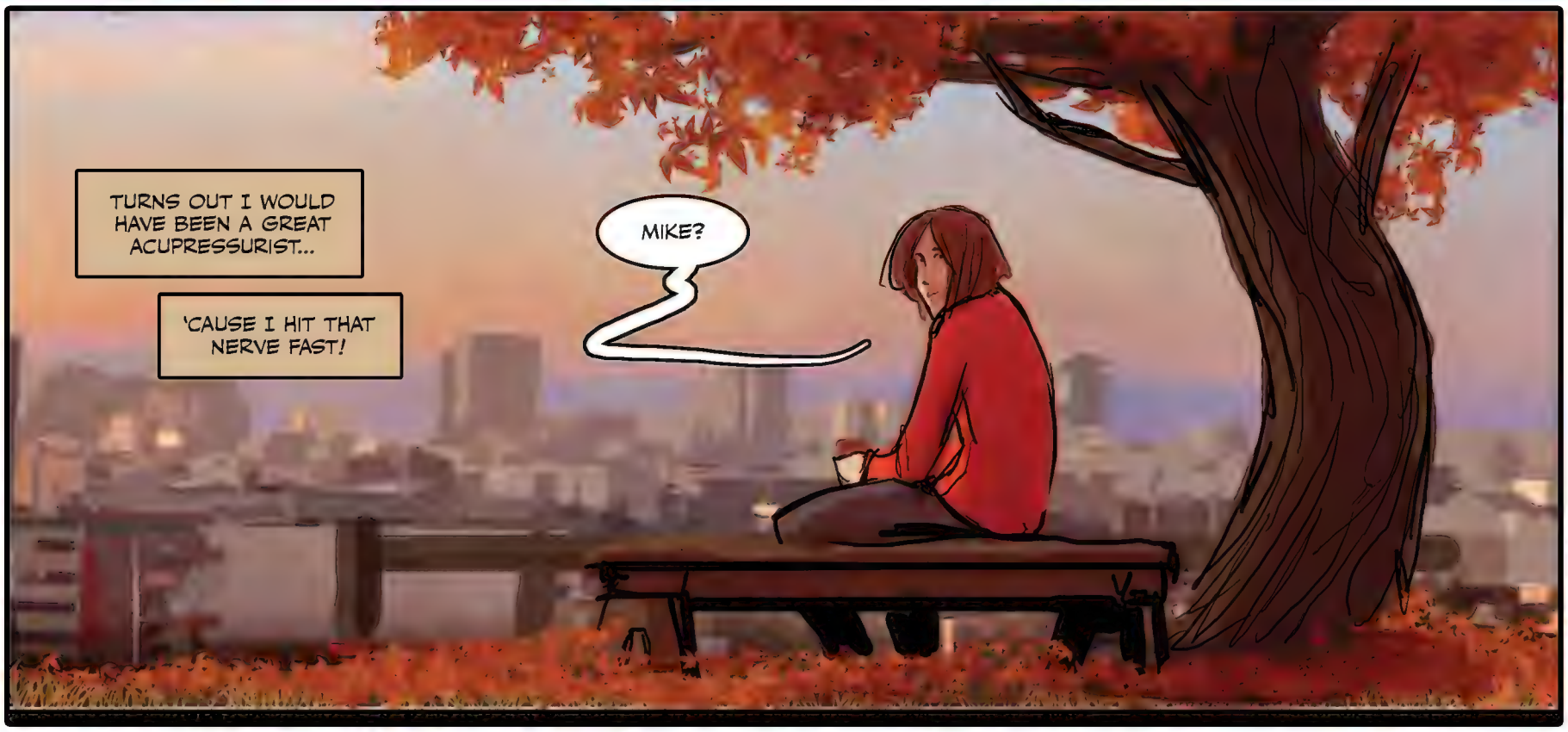
O-O-KAY? SO, UMM...HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU, THEN?

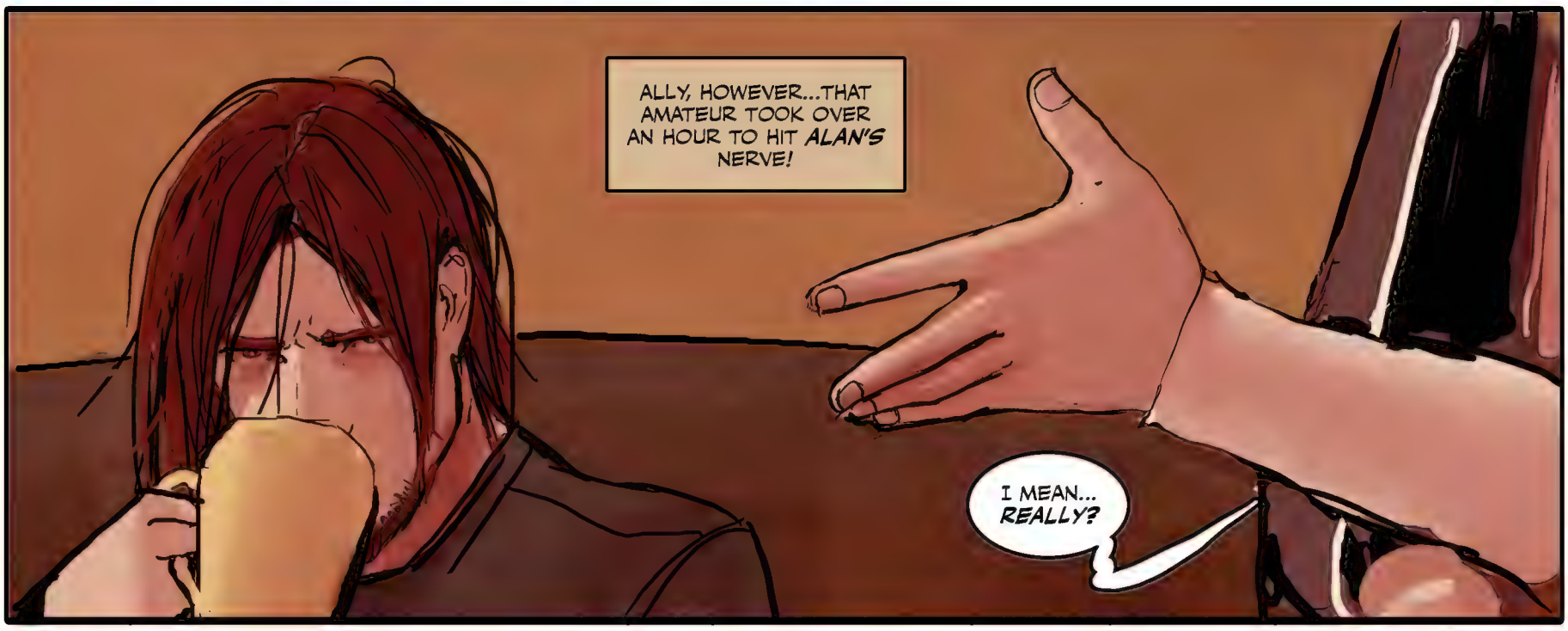
YOU CAN TELL ME, YOU KNOW...


SINCE WHEN ARE *YOU* THE LISTENER?
WHY *YES!* IT WAS MY INTENTION TO HURT AND ALIENATE *EVERYONE* I CARED ABOUT THAT DAY.

FEEL FREE TO HATE ME. I DO.
YEAH...
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT...


UGH...
UMM...SO... HOW COME YOU ARE STAYING HERE, MIKE?

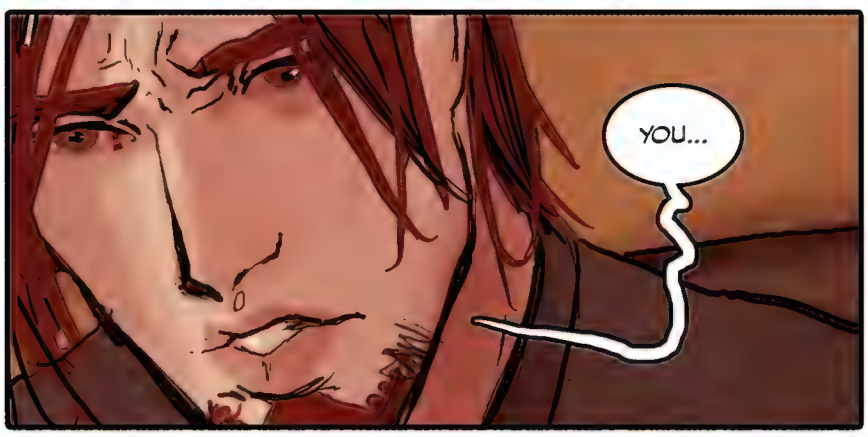

TURNS OUT I WOULD HAVE BEEN A GREAT ACUPRESSURIST...
'CAUSE I HIT THAT NERVE FAST!
MIKE?


ALLY, HOWEVER...THAT AMATEUR TOOK OVER AN HOUR TO HIT *ALAN'S* NERVE!
I MEAN... *REALLY?*

AND WHAT DO I FUCKING FIND???
A NOTE!!!

WHO THE FUCK LEAVES A SITUATION LIKE THAT WITH JUST A NOTE!?

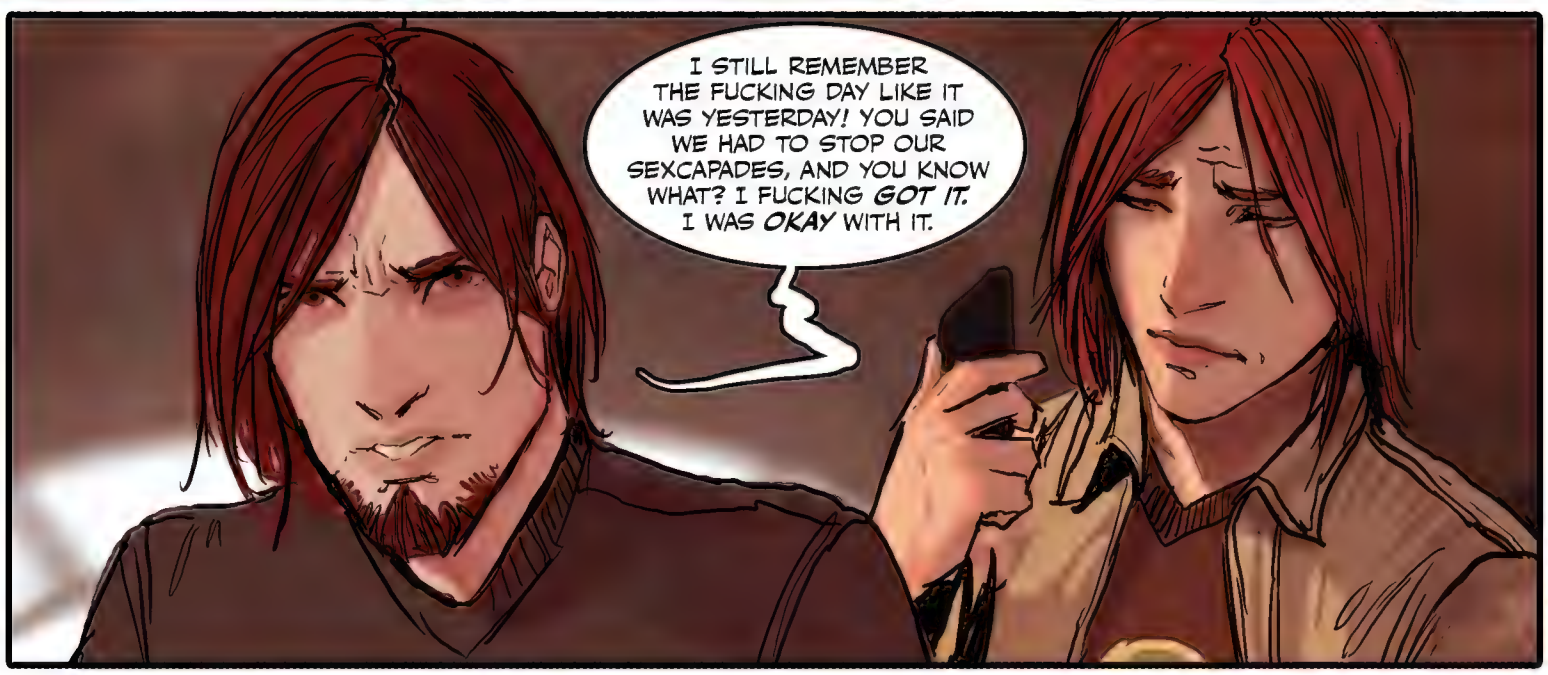
WHO THE FUCK DOES THAT!?

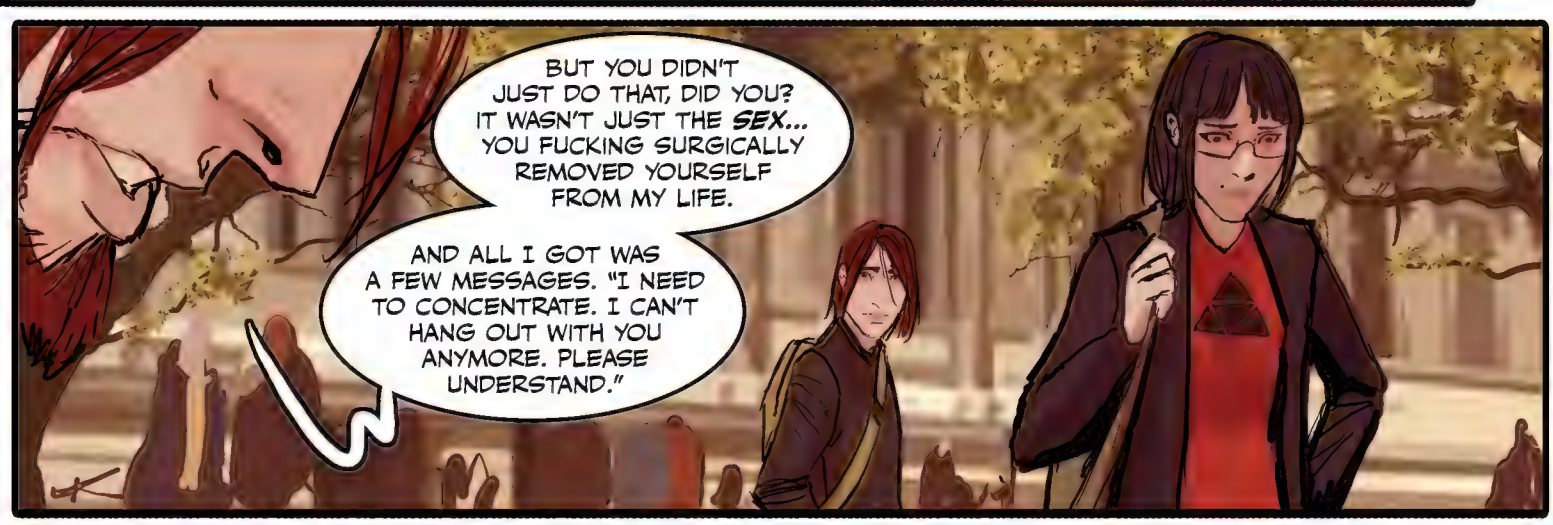

YOU...

YOU FUCKING DID THAT!
SO THAT TIME WHEN ALLY TOLD ME ABOUT ALAN AND HER?
SHE MAY HAVE OMITTED A FEW DETAILS.

OH...

YEAH... OH!


I STILL REMEMBER THE FUCKING DAY LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY! YOU SAID WE HAD TO STOP OUR SEXCAPADES, AND YOU KNOW WHAT? I FUCKING GOT IT. I WAS OKAY WITH IT.

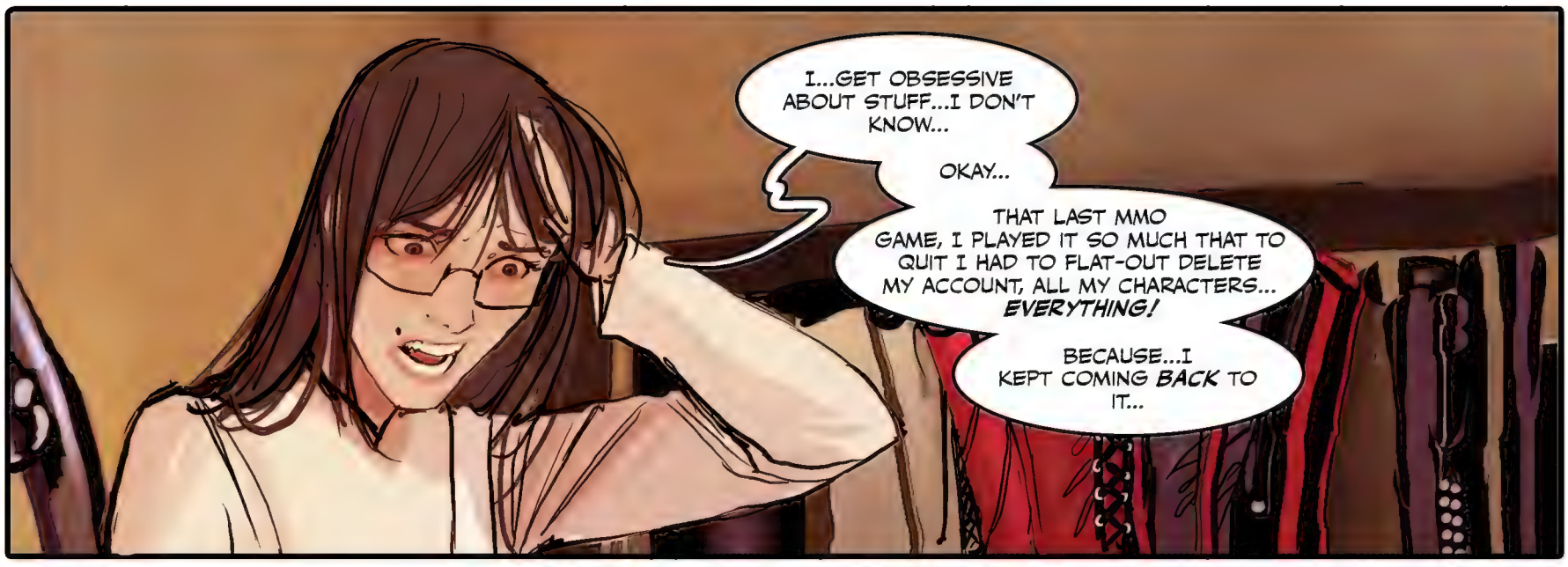

BUT YOU DIDN'T JUST DO THAT, DID YOU? IT WASN'T JUST THE SEX... YOU FUCKING SURGICALLY REMOVED YOURSELF FROM MY LIFE.
AND ALL I GOT WAS A FEW MESSAGES. "I NEED TO CONCENTRATE. I CAN'T HANG OUT WITH YOU ANYMORE. PLEASE UNDERSTAND."

IT WAS...

WHAT? WHAT WAS IT?

IT WAS ME, YOU ASSHOLE! DID YOU EVER THINK THAT I MAY HAVE HAD SELF-CONTROL ISSUES???

I WAS THROWING MY SCHOLARSHIP AWAY BECAUSE I COULDN'T FOCUS FOR SHIT!


I...GET OBSESSIVE ABOUT STUFF...I DON'T KNOW...
OKAY...
THAT LAST MMO GAME, I PLAYED IT SO MUCH THAT TO QUIT I HAD TO FLAT-OUT DELETE MY ACCOUNT, ALL MY CHARACTERS... EVERYTHING!
BECAUSE...I KEPT COMING BACK TO IT...

YEAH NO, PERFECT METAPHOR!

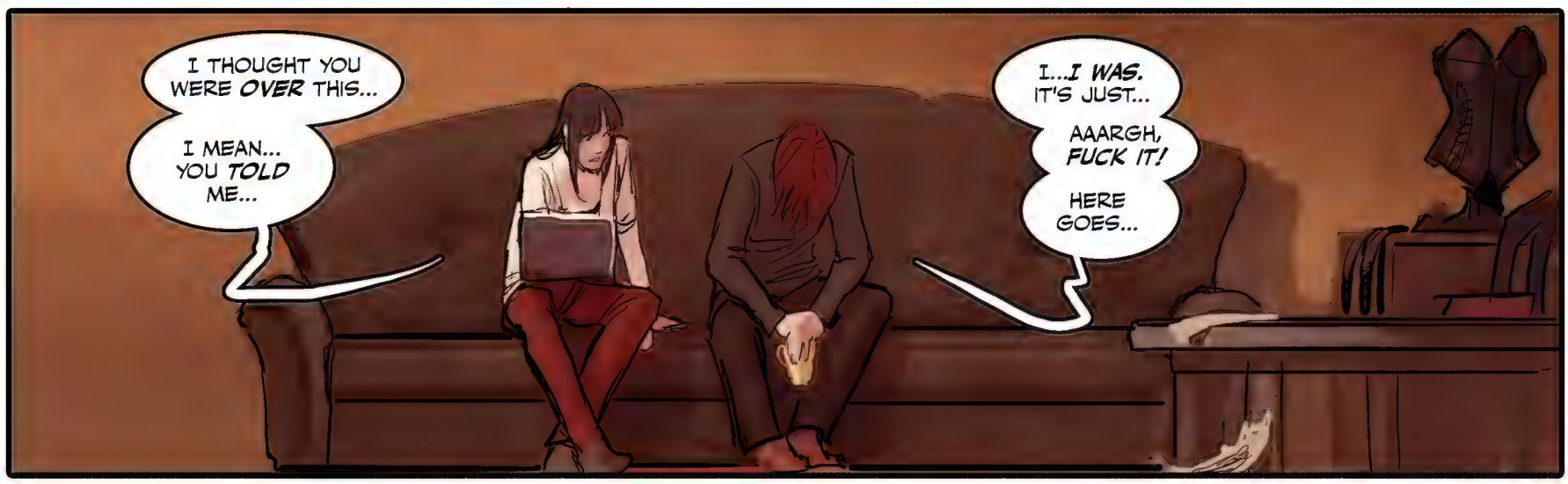
I...

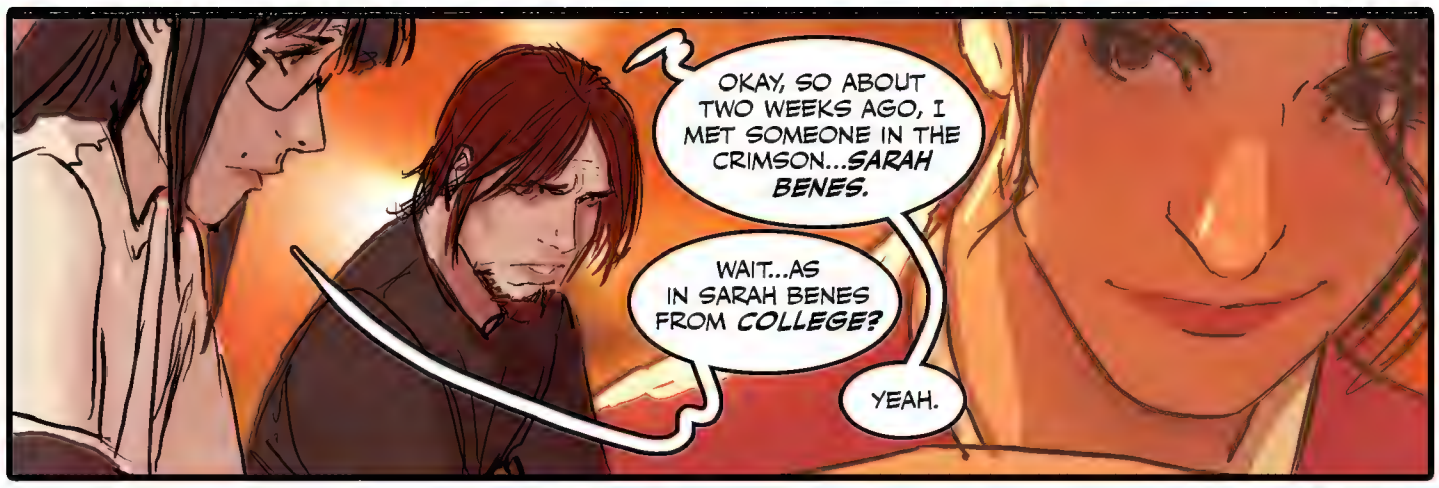
ARGH...
I GET IT, ALLY...

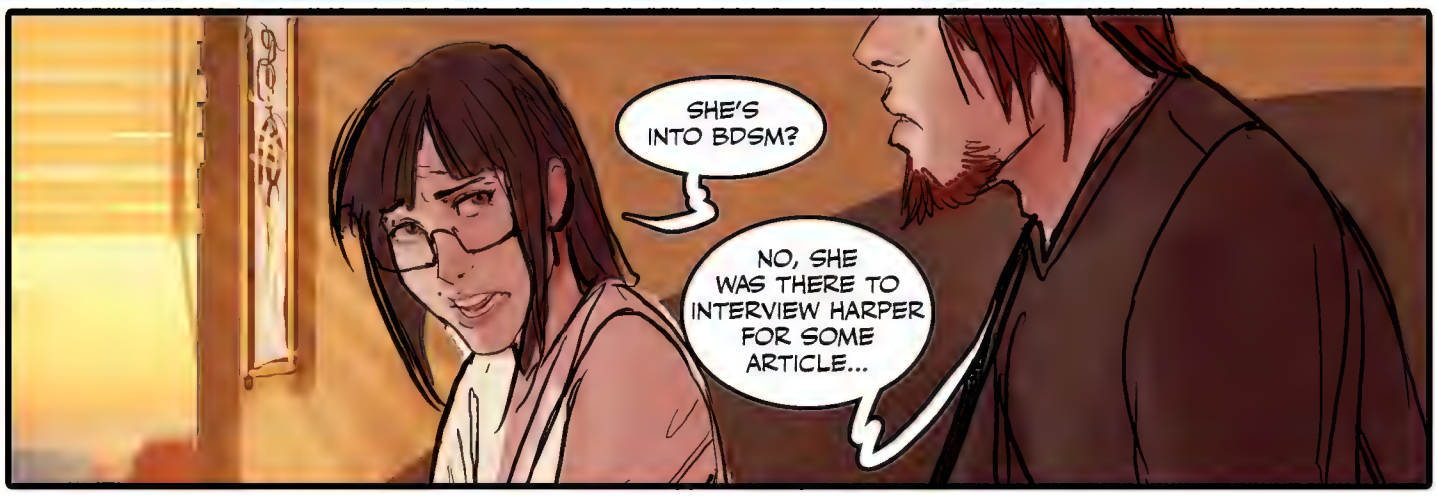
I DO...
BUT MEANWHILE, I WAS COMPLETELY ALONE...

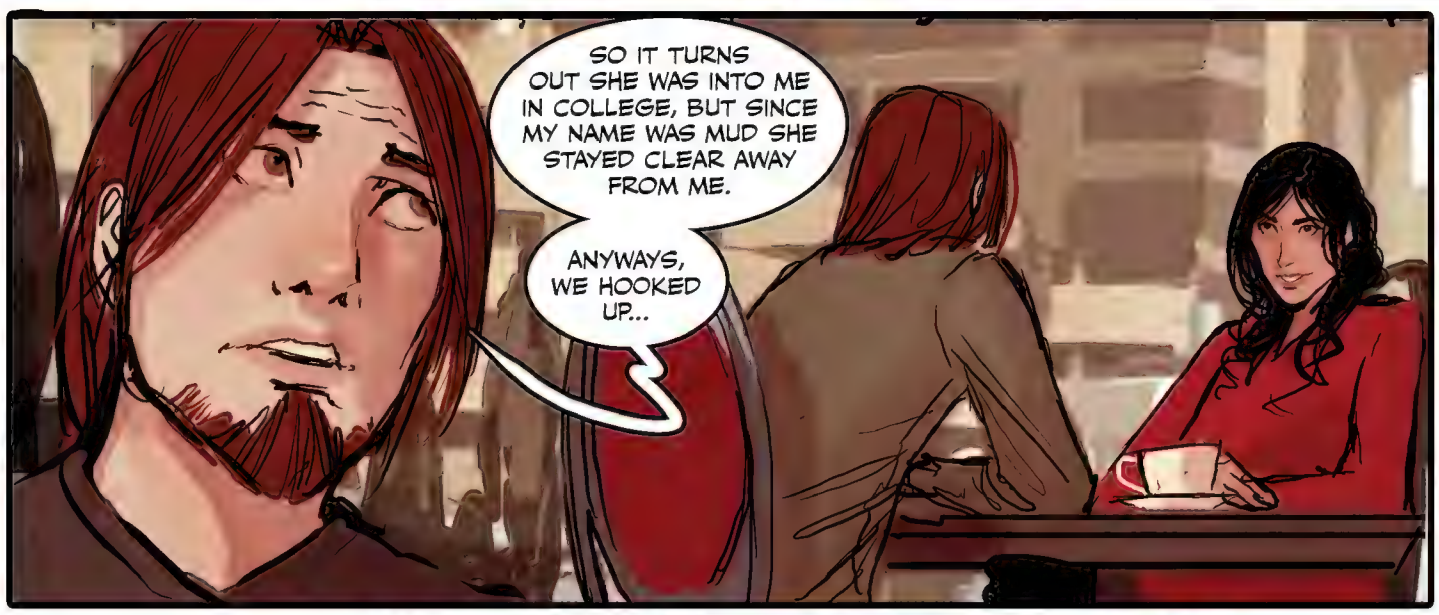
THAT DAY WHEN THEY POSTED MY SKETCHBOOK UP IN THE HALLWAYS, THAT PRETTY MUCH MADE ME A PERMANENT BUTT OF EVERYONE'S JOKES.
BUT WITH YOU, I DIDN'T GIVE A FUCK ABOUT WHAT ANYONE THOUGHT...
BEYOND ALL THE SEX STUFF...
I HAD SOMEONE I COULD TALK WITH... LAUGH WITH...
AND THEN YOU LEFT...

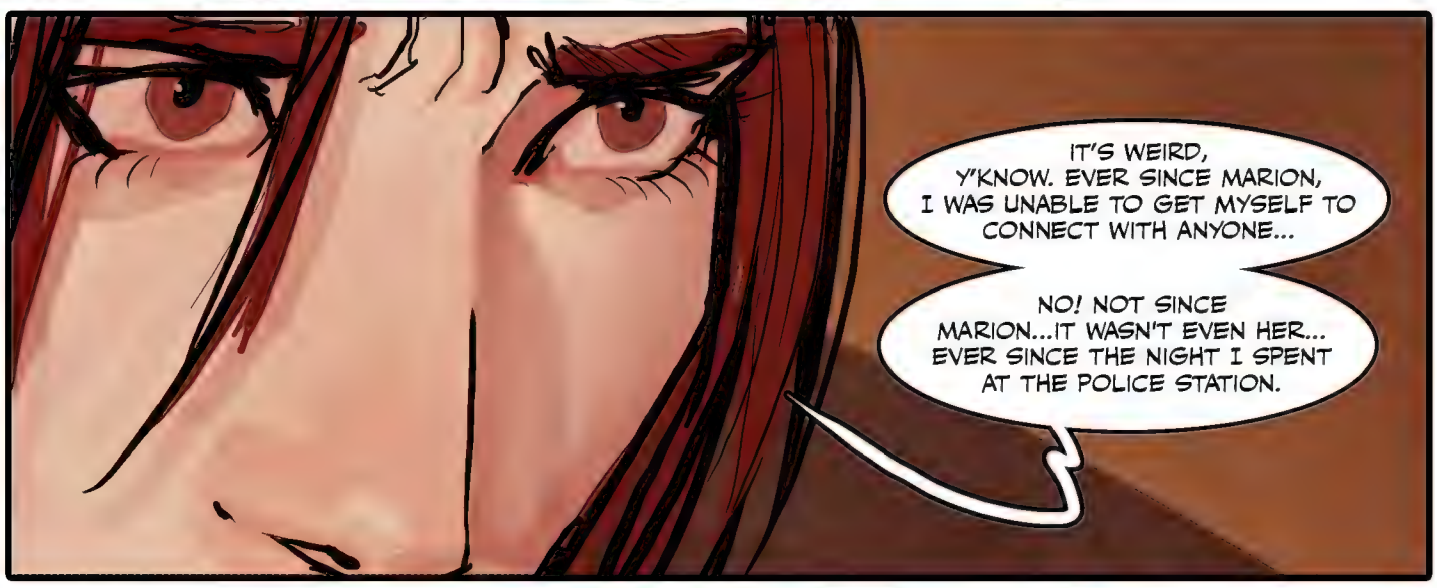
I ENDED UP GETTING ONE NEW FRIEND AFTER YOU! JUST ONE!
AND EVEN THAT WAS BECAUSE CHRIS WAS A BIT OF AN OUTCAST HIMSELF.

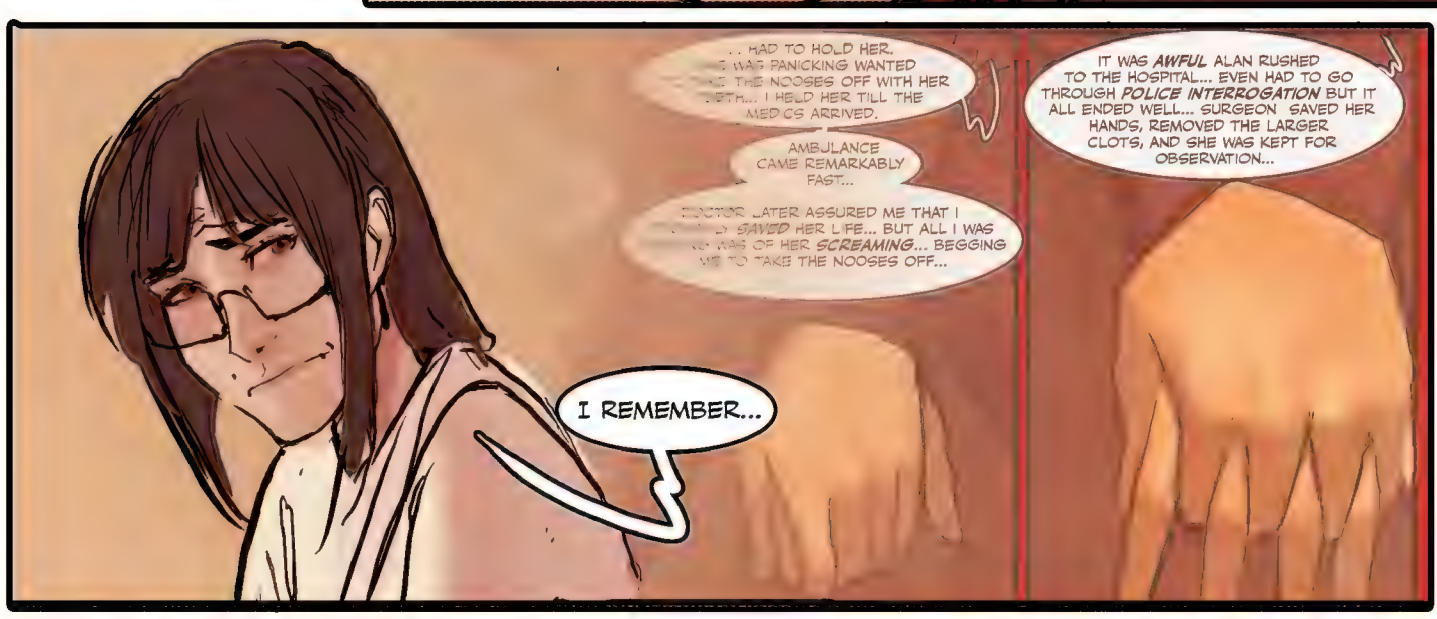

I THOUGHT YOU WERE OVER THIS...
I MEAN... YOU TOLD ME...
I...I WAS. IT'S JUST...
AAARGH, FUCK IT!
HERE GOES...


OKAY, SO ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO, I MET SOMEONE IN THE CRIMSON...*SARAH BENES.*
WAIT...AS IN SARAH BENES FROM *COLLEGE?*
YEAH.

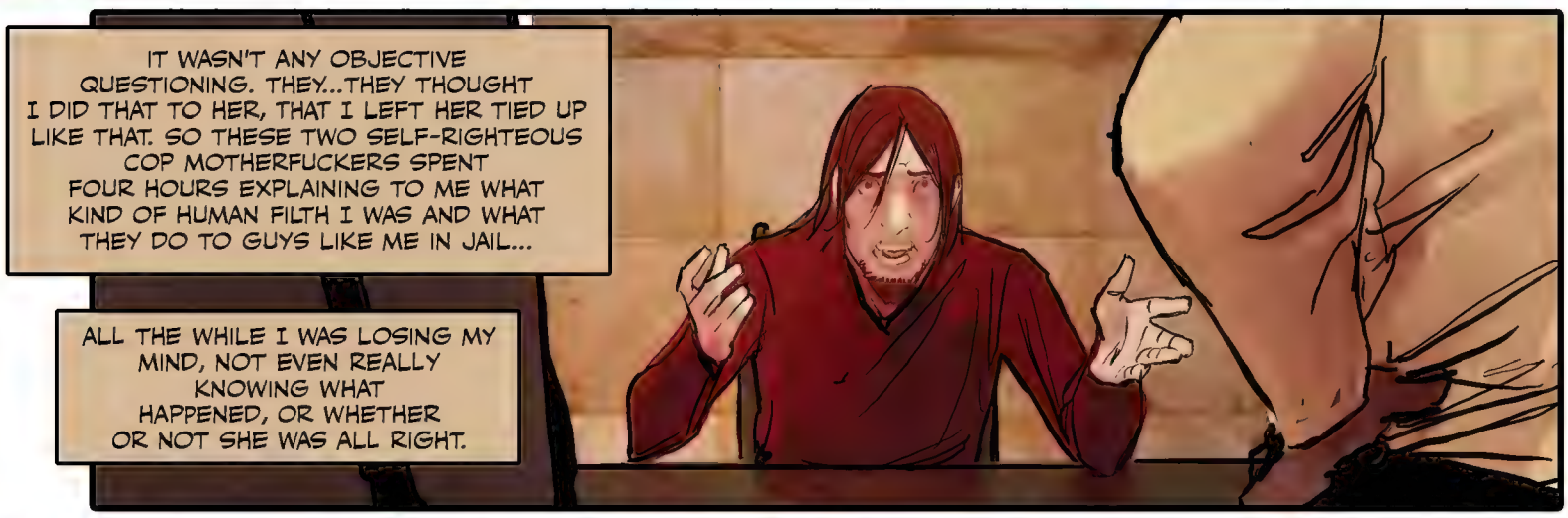

SHE'S INTO BDSM?
NO, SHE WAS THERE TO INTERVIEW HARPER FOR SOME ARTICLE...


SO IT TURNS OUT SHE WAS INTO ME IN COLLEGE, BUT SINCE MY NAME WAS MUD SHE STAYED CLEAR AWAY FROM ME.
ANYWAYS, WE HOOKED UP...


IT'S WEIRD, Y'KNOW. EVER SINCE MARION, I WAS UNABLE TO GET MYSELF TO CONNECT WITH ANYONE...
NO! NOT SINCE MARION...IT WASN'T EVEN HER... EVER SINCE THE NIGHT I SPENT AT THE POLICE STATION.

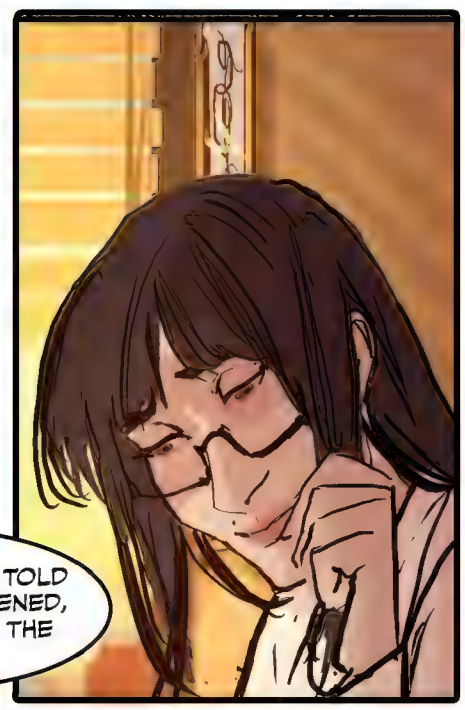

I REMEMBER...
HAD TO HOLD HER. WAS PANICKING WANTED THE NOOSES OFF WITH HER ...TH... I HELD HER TILL THE MEDICS ARRIVED.
AMBULANCE CAME REMARKABLY FAST...
DOCTOR LATER ASSURED ME THAT I ...D *SAVED* HER LIFE... BUT ALL I WAS ...WAS OF HER *SCREAMING*... BEGGING ME TO TAKE THE NOOSES OFF...
IT WAS *AWFUL* ALAN RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL... EVEN HAD TO GO THROUGH *POLICE INTERROGATION* BUT IT ALL ENDED WELL... SURGEON SAVED HER HANDS, REMOVED THE LARGER CLOTS, AND SHE WAS KEPT FOR OBSERVATION...

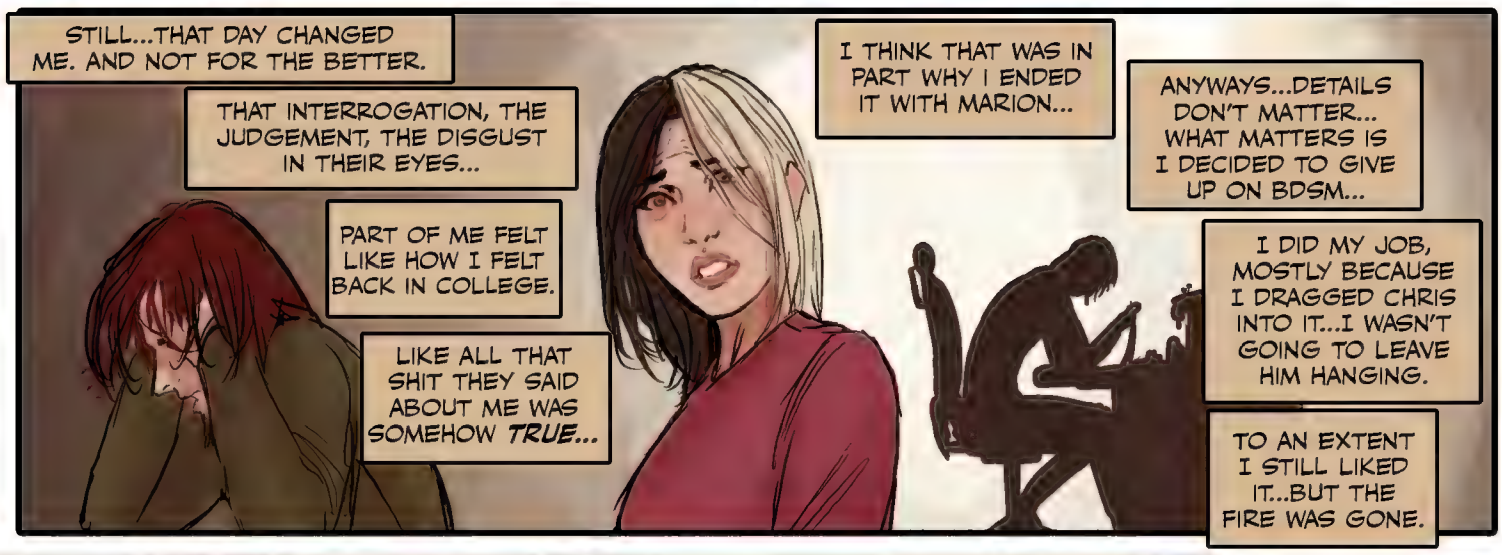
I TOLD YOU I WAS QUESTIONED...BUT TRUTH WAS, IT WAS WORSE...

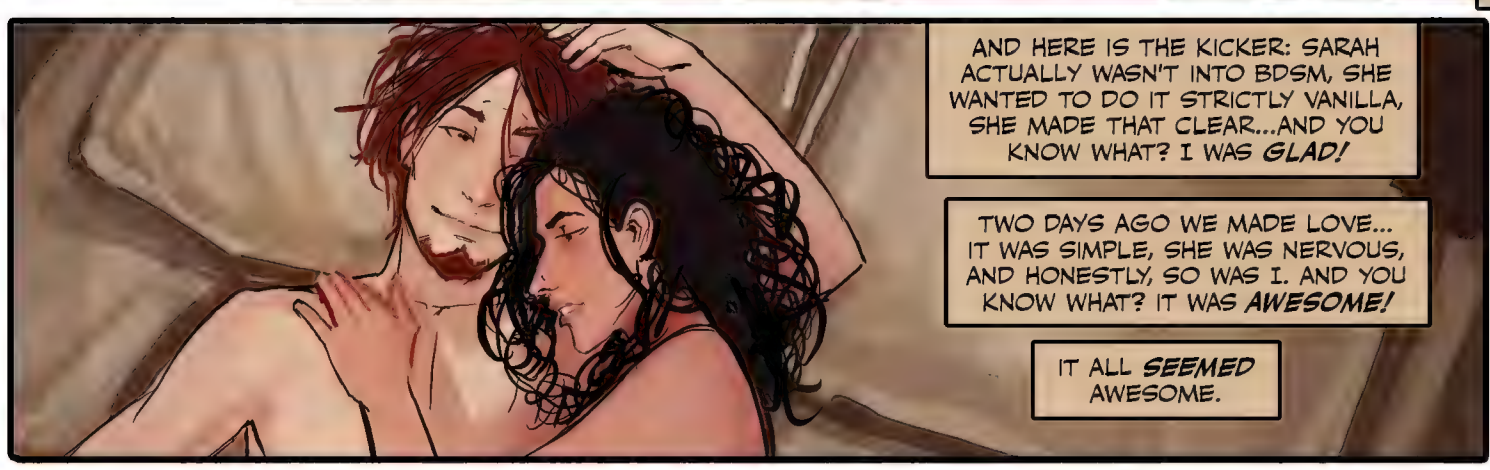

IT WASN'T ANY OBJECTIVE QUESTIONING. THEY...THEY THOUGHT I DID THAT TO HER, THAT I LEFT HER TIED UP LIKE THAT. SO THESE TWO SELF-RIGHTEOUS COP MOTHERFUCKERS SPENT FOUR HOURS EXPLAINING TO ME WHAT KIND OF HUMAN FILTH I WAS AND WHAT THEY DO TO GUYS LIKE ME IN JAIL...
ALL THE WHILE I WAS LOSING MY MIND, NOT EVEN REALLY KNOWING WHAT HAPPENED, OR WHETHER OR NOT SHE WAS ALL RIGHT.

OH, GOD...ALAN, YOU NEVER TOLD ME...

YOU DID ENOUGH...
YOU SHOWED UP, TOLD THEM WHAT HAPPENED, AND YOU SAVED THE DAY AGAIN.

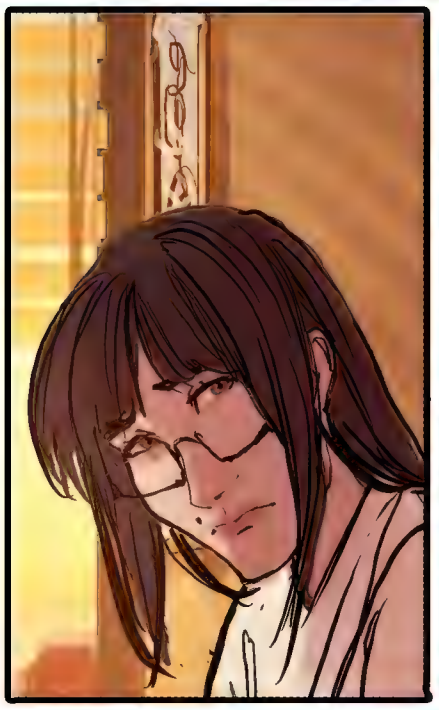



STILL...THAT DAY CHANGED ME. AND NOT FOR THE BETTER.
THAT INTERROGATION, THE JUDGEMENT, THE DISGUST IN THEIR EYES...
PART OF ME FELT LIKE HOW I FELT BACK IN COLLEGE.
LIKE ALL THAT SHIT THEY SAID ABOUT ME WAS SOMEHOW *TRUE...*
I THINK THAT WAS IN PART WHY I ENDED IT WITH MARION...
ANYWAYS...DETAILS DON'T MATTER... WHAT MATTERS IS I DECIDED TO GIVE UP ON BDSM...
I DID MY JOB, MOSTLY BECAUSE I DRAGGED CHRIS INTO IT...I WASN'T GOING TO LEAVE HIM HANGING.
TO AN EXTENT I STILL LIKED IT...BUT THE FIRE WAS GONE.


AND HERE IS THE KICKER: SARAH ACTUALLY WASN'T INTO BDSM, SHE WANTED TO DO IT STRICTLY VANILLA, SHE MADE THAT CLEAR...AND YOU KNOW WHAT? I WAS *GLAD!*
TWO DAYS AGO WE MADE LOVE... IT WAS SIMPLE, SHE WAS NERVOUS, AND HONESTLY, SO WAS I. AND YOU KNOW WHAT? IT WAS *AWESOME!*
IT ALL *SEEMED* AWESOME.

AND THEN YESTERDAY, SHE WALKS INTO A MEETING WHILE I'M TAKING MEASURMENTS FOR A SET OF PERFORMANCE OUTFITS, AND THE WHOLE DAY SHE KEEPS GIVING ME SHIT ABOUT IT.

SEE, IN THE GLORIOUS FUCKING EXPLOSION OF IRONY, SHE DIDN'T TRUST ME BECAUSE I WORKED WITH THESE PERFORMERS...SO WE HAD A MASSIVE FALLOUT.
YOU KNOW WHAT, AT LEAST BDSM IS BASED ON TRUST, WHICH IS MORE THAN WE HAVE HERE!
OH, TRUST, MY ASS! GO FUCK YOURSELF, YOU PERVERTED SHIT! NEVER CALL ME AGAIN!

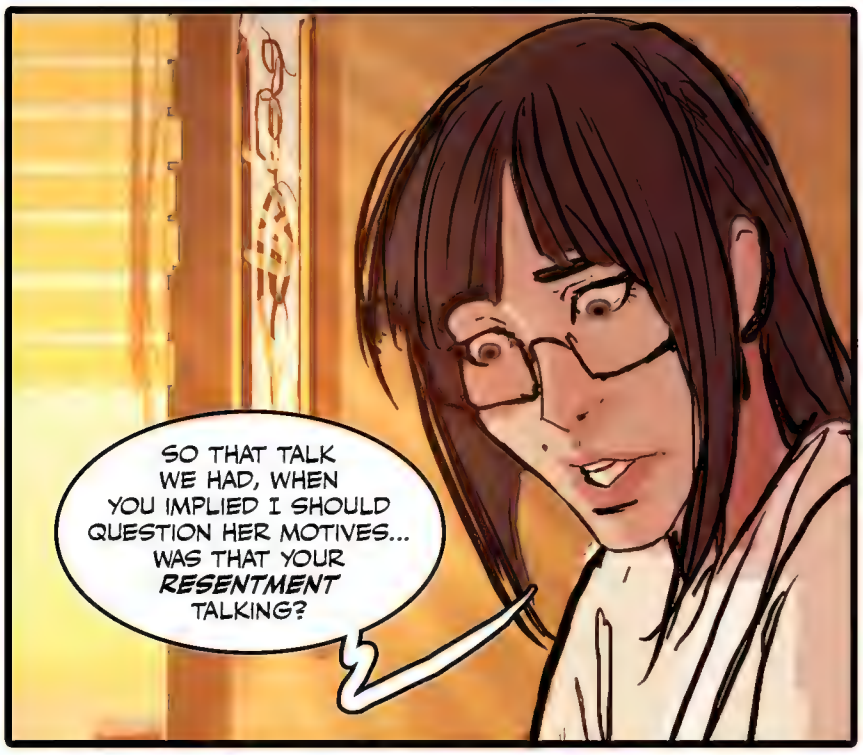


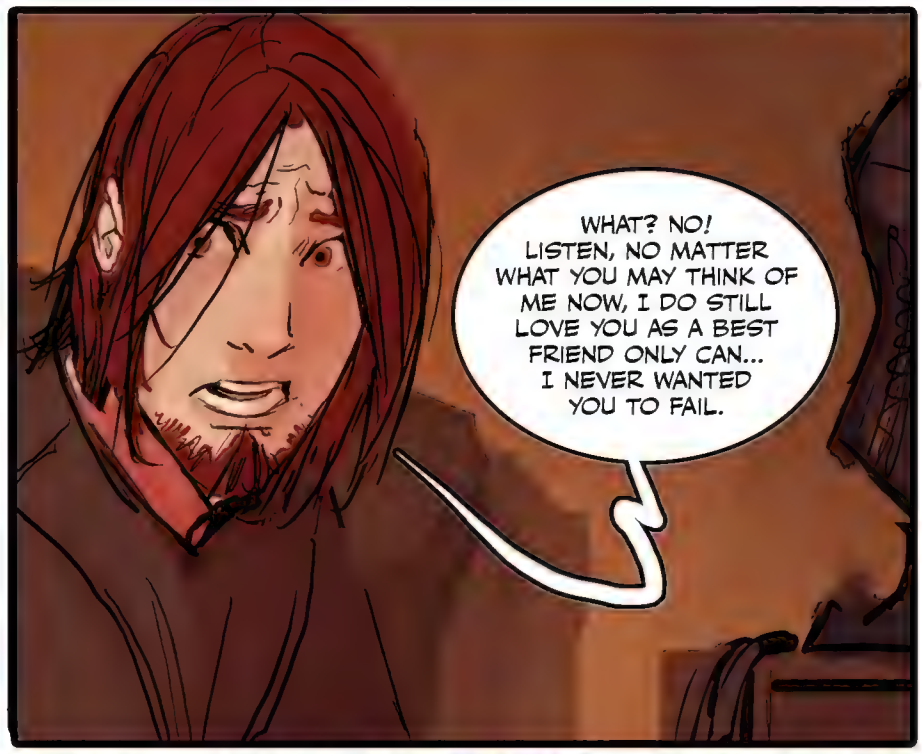
ANNND...THEN I GOT PISSY, THREW A TEMPER TANTRUM, AND REDECORATED MY APARTMENT.

WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL ME?

I FIGURED SINCE YOU WERE CALLING ME LESS AND LESS OFTEN, I FELT...I DON'T KNOW...OBSOLETE.
YOU AND LISA HAD YOUR OWN THING GOING...

ALSO...
I WAS A BIT...JEALOUS.
WHAT?
SINCE YOU STARTED DOING IT WITH LISA, I WAS KINDA JEALOUS, A BIT RESENTFUL. YOU KNOW, A BIT MORE EAGER TO POKE FUN AT YOU.


SO THAT TALK WE HAD, WHEN YOU IMPLIED I SHOULD QUESTION HER MOTIVES... WAS THAT YOUR *RESENTMENT* TALKING?

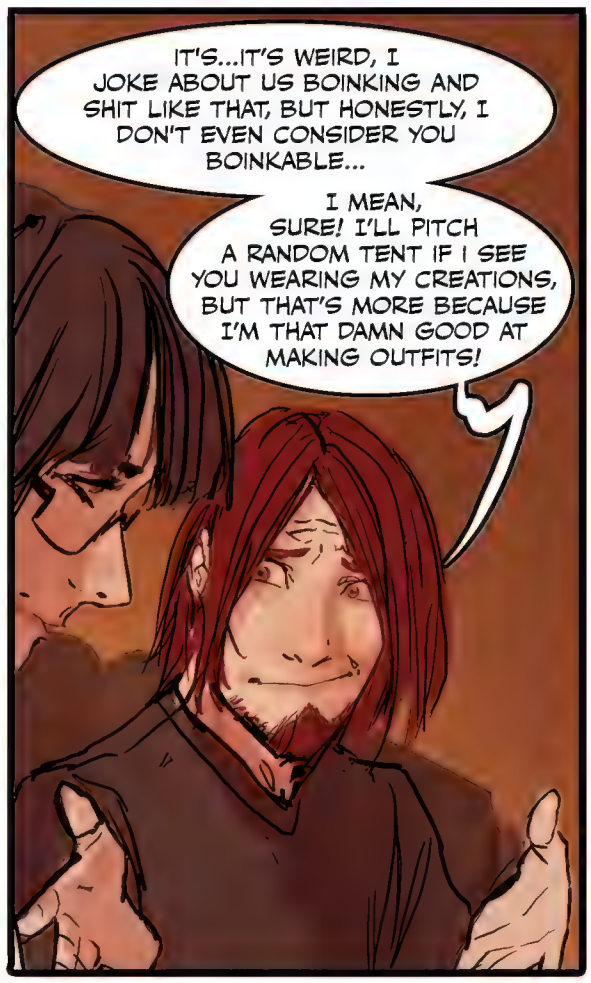

WHAT? NO! LISTEN, NO MATTER WHAT YOU MAY THINK OF ME NOW, I DO STILL LOVE YOU AS A BEST FRIEND ONLY CAN... I NEVER WANTED YOU TO FAIL.

THE THING IS, WHEN I SAW THAT YOU WERE ACTUALLY FALLING FOR HER... I WAS HAPPY FOR YOU... I REALLY WAS.

AND YET AT THE SAME TIME I WAS FREAKING OUT... WE USED TO CALL EACH OTHER DAILY, MEET FOR COFFEE, PLAY GAMES, WATCH MOVIES...AND I SAW THAT ERODE. HELL, WE HAVEN'T EVEN *TALKED* FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS.

I FELT THAT I WAS LOSING YOU AGAIN...DON'T GET ME WRONG, IT WASN'T SOME POSSESSIVE POWER TRIP, IT WAS JUST...WELL...

FUCK, I NEVER HAD A FRIEND IN MY LIFE THAT COULD EVEN *REMOTELY* COMPARE TO YOU...YOU KNOW...


IT'S...IT'S WEIRD, I JOKE ABOUT US BOINKING AND SHIT LIKE THAT, BUT HONESTLY, I DON'T EVEN CONSIDER YOU BOINKABLE...
I MEAN, SURE! I'LL PITCH A RANDOM TENT IF I SEE YOU WEARING MY CREATIONS, BUT THAT'S MORE BECAUSE I'M THAT DAMN GOOD AT MAKING OUTFITS!

WELL... THANKS... I THINK?

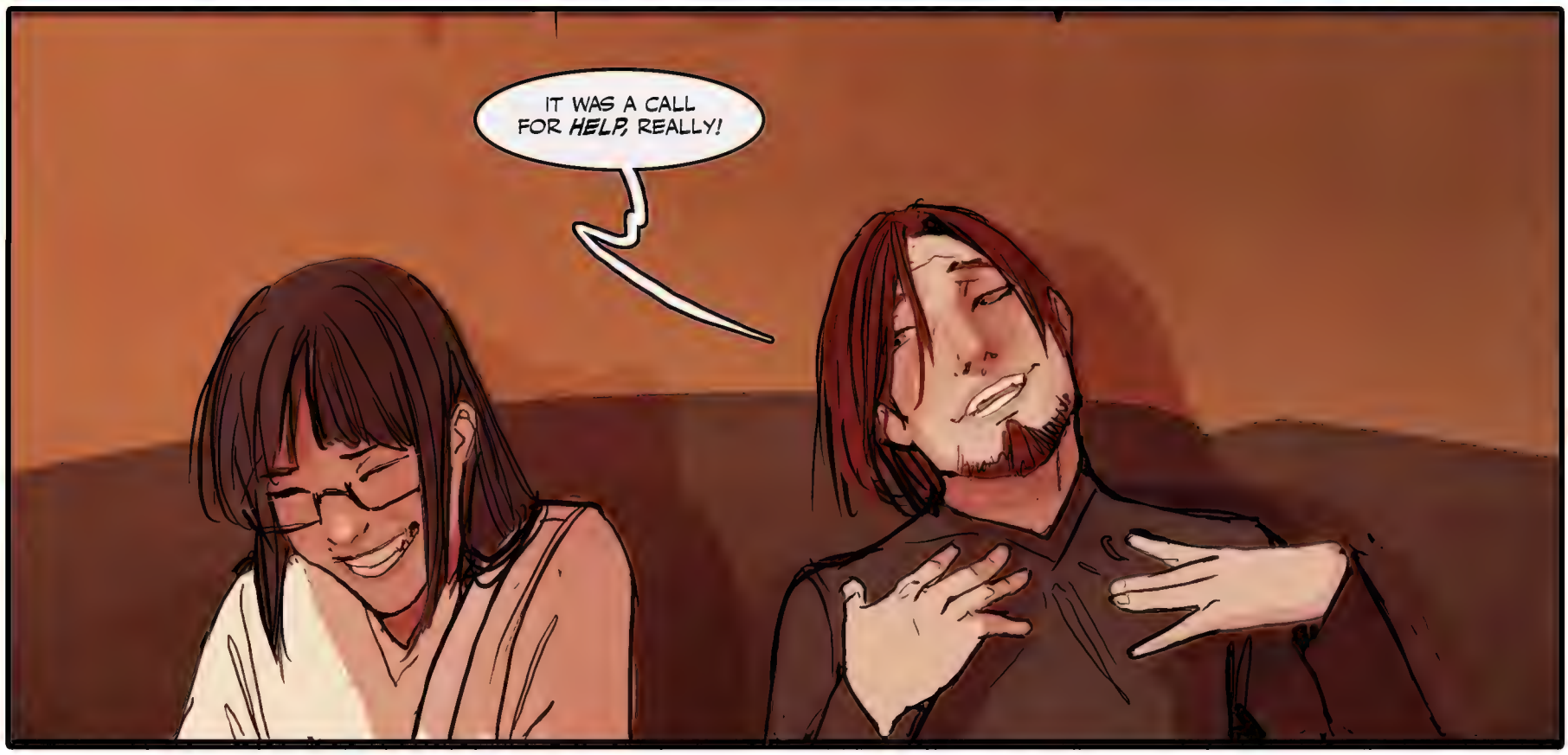
I'M SERIOUS! YOU MEAN TOO MUCH TO ME, AND, WELL... OLD FEARS STARTED CREEPING IN AND HONESTLY, I STARTED PANICKING.

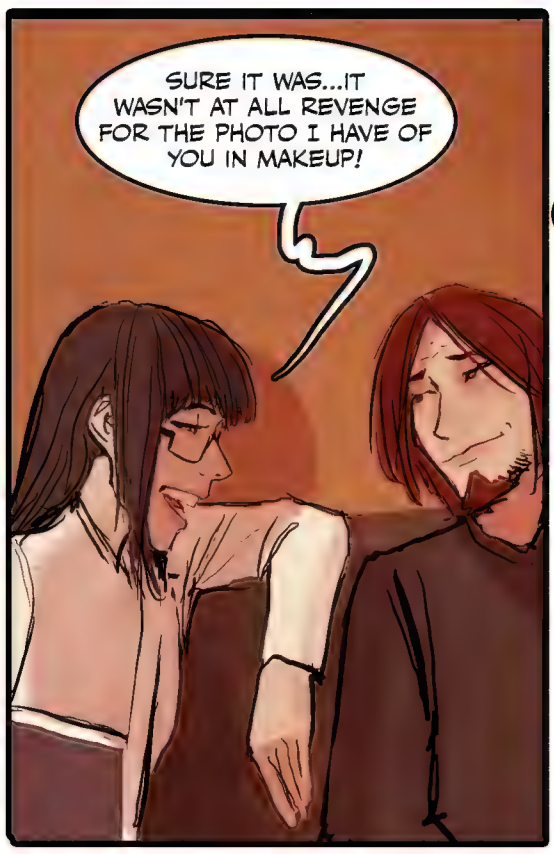
GOT THAT OLD FEELING OF BEING *DITCHED*, YOU KNOW...

YOU NEVER GAVE ME ANY SIGN.

I AM A *GUY*, ALLY... WE DON'T DO SIGNS WELL... WHEN WE ARE KIDS WE PULL THE HAIR OF GIRLS WE LIKE...WE TROLL OUR BEST FRIENDS...

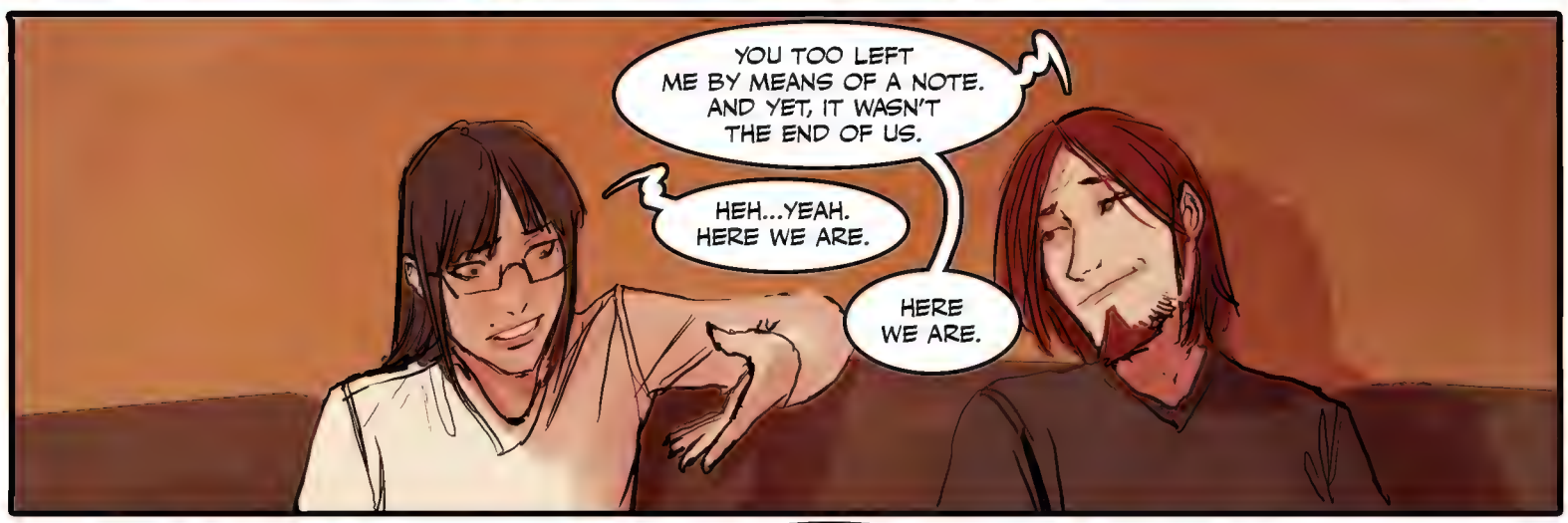
I SPILL MILK ON YOU AND TAKE A PHOTO!


IT WAS A CALL FOR *HELP*, REALLY!


SURE IT WAS...IT WASN'T AT ALL REVENGE FOR THE PHOTO I HAVE OF YOU IN MAKEUP!

HEH...YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I MISSED THIS...
TRUTH IS, THE LAST TWO YEARS HAVE TURNED ME INTO A BIT OF A BITTER, MEAN ASSHOLE...

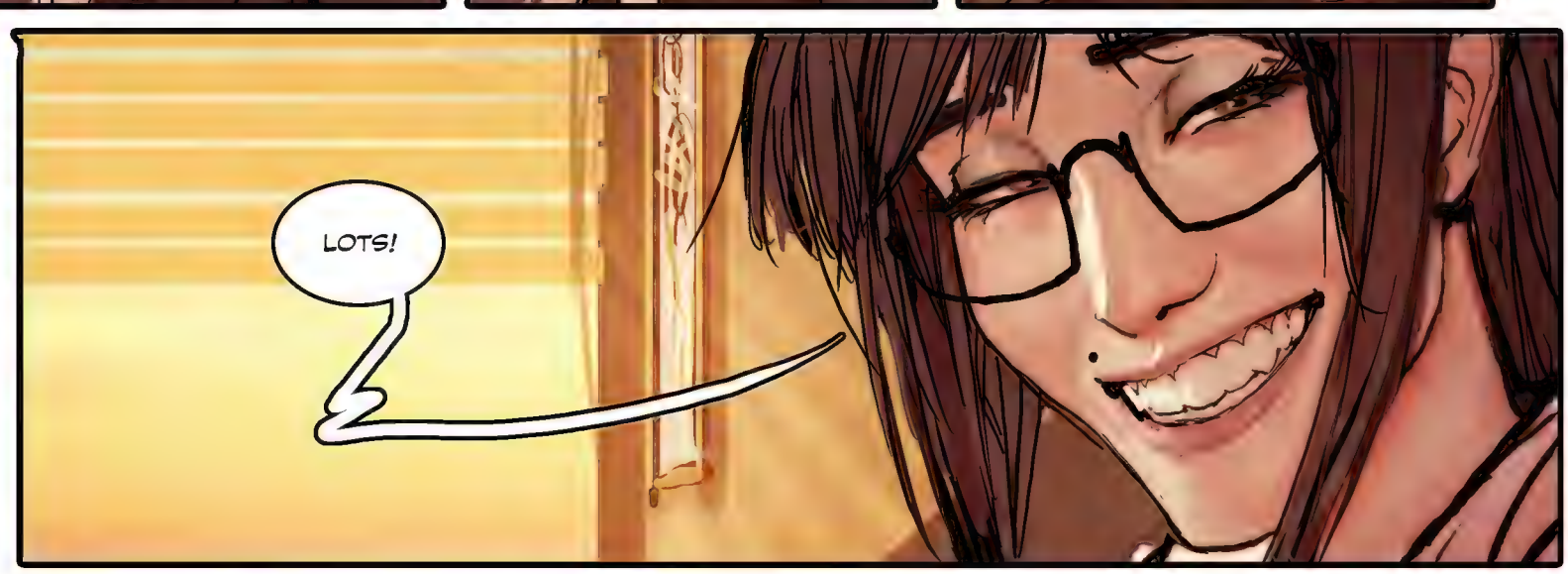
I'VE HAD QUITE A FEW SHITTY TIMES IN MY LIFE... YOU HELPED ME THROUGH MANY OF THEM...
IT IS KINDA FUNNY THOUGH...
?


YOU TOO LEFT ME BY MEANS OF A NOTE. AND YET, IT WASN'T THE END OF US.
HEH...YEAH. HERE WE ARE.
HERE WE ARE.

WOW...THIS JUST WENT FULL CIRCLE.
HEH...I GUESS.
SO, YOU'RE SAYING I SHOULD... WHAT? GIVE HER *TIME?*

HOW THE FUCK SHOULD I KNOW? WHAT PART OF OUR CONVERSATION MADE YOU THINK: *THIS GUY!* THIS GUY WHOSE *EVERY* RELATIONSHIP EVER CRASHED AND BURNED -- *HE* KNOWS HIS RELATIONSHIP SHIT!
HEH...
HAH... AHAHAHAH!

OKAY, SO WE'RE BOTH MOPEY...
AND USELESS!
AND USELESS!
ALCOHOL?


LOTS!

NOW, I'LL SPARE YOU THE BOREDOM OF LISTENING ABOUT THE REST OF MY DAY AS IT MOSTLY CONSISTED OF MY MOM TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY ALL OF A SUDDEN *ALL* OF HER KIDS CAME HOME...

INSTEAD LET'S MOVE ON TO NEXT MORNING, AND THE AFTERMATH OF ALLY AND ALAN'S BINGE.

SO *THIS* IS NOW APPARENTLY A THING...

YEP! GONNA NEED SOME CONTEXT RIGHT ABOUT NOW! COME ON! LOAD, BRAIN! *LOAD!*

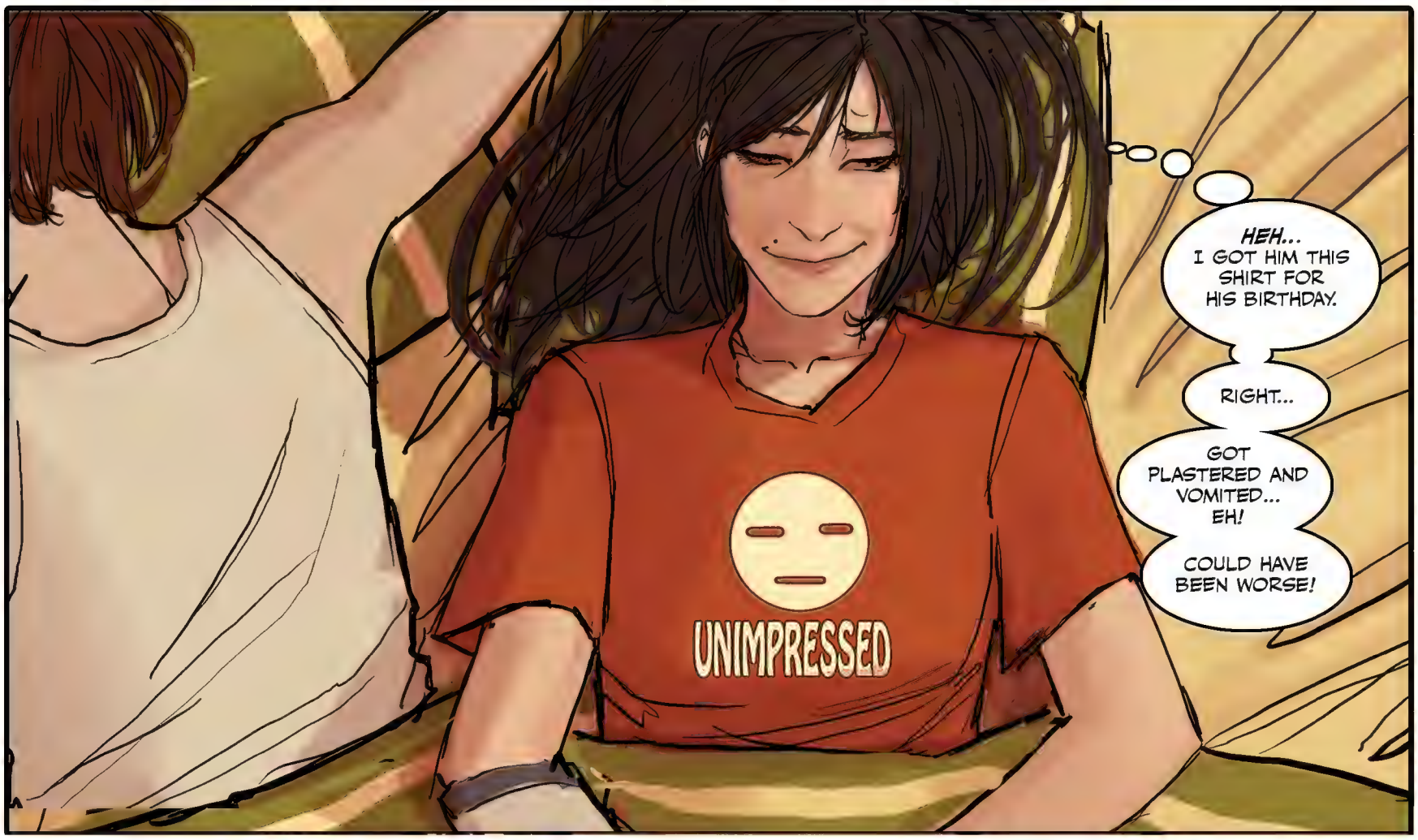
OKAY, YEAH...WE STARTED DRINKING...

THEN AFTER A FEW DRINKS OUR CONVERSATIONS TURNED TO...THE *PAST,* I GUESS?
I'M JUST SAYING, YOU *ALWAYS* KINDA LEANED THAT WAY.
OH, *COME ON!* NO, I DIDN'T!
REALLY? YOU MADE ME SHAVE MY GOATEE AND THEN THERE WAS THE WHOLE LIPSTICK THING...
THAT WAS BECAUSE...
FUCK...

SOOOO... WE DRANK MORE...
AND THEN? *OH,* RIGHT.

THAT WHOLE THING!
BLARGH!

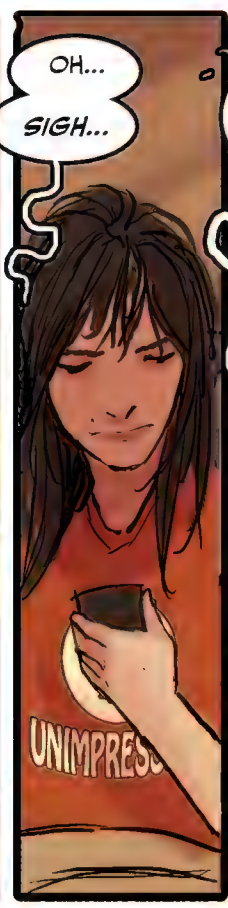
YEAH...
ENDED UP GETTING SOME ON MY SHIRT...

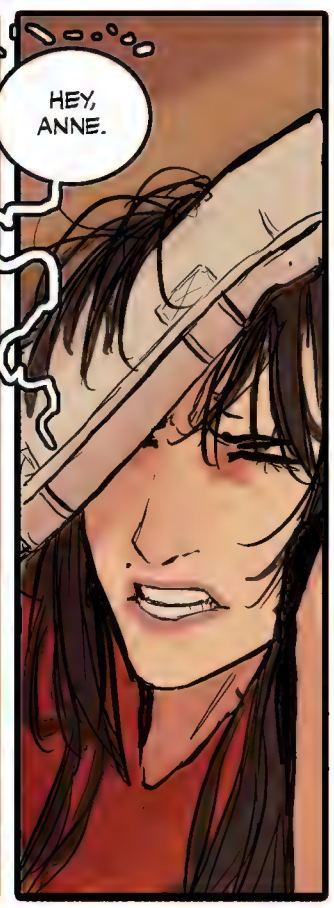

HEH... I GOT HIM THIS SHIRT FOR HIS BIRTHDAY.
RIGHT...
GOT PLASTERED AND VOMITED... EH!
COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE!
UNIMPRESSED

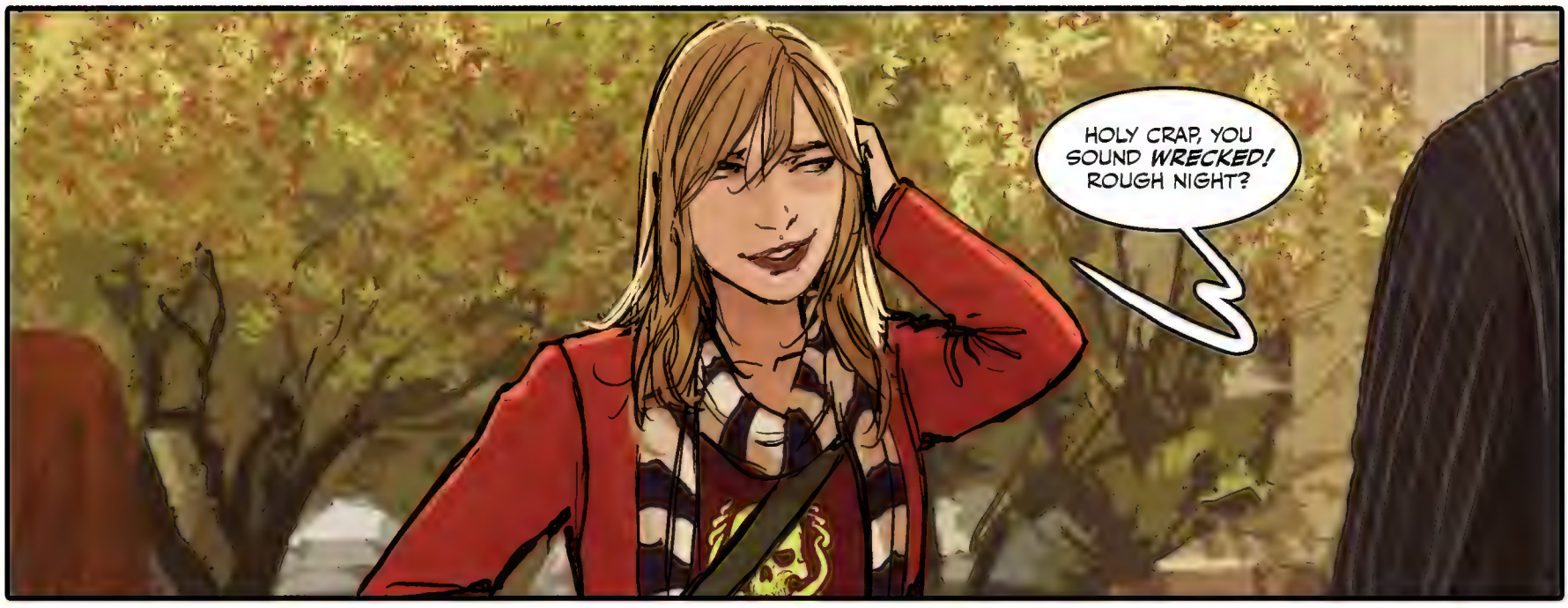
BELELEP
OH, FOR FUCK'S SAKE! WHO...

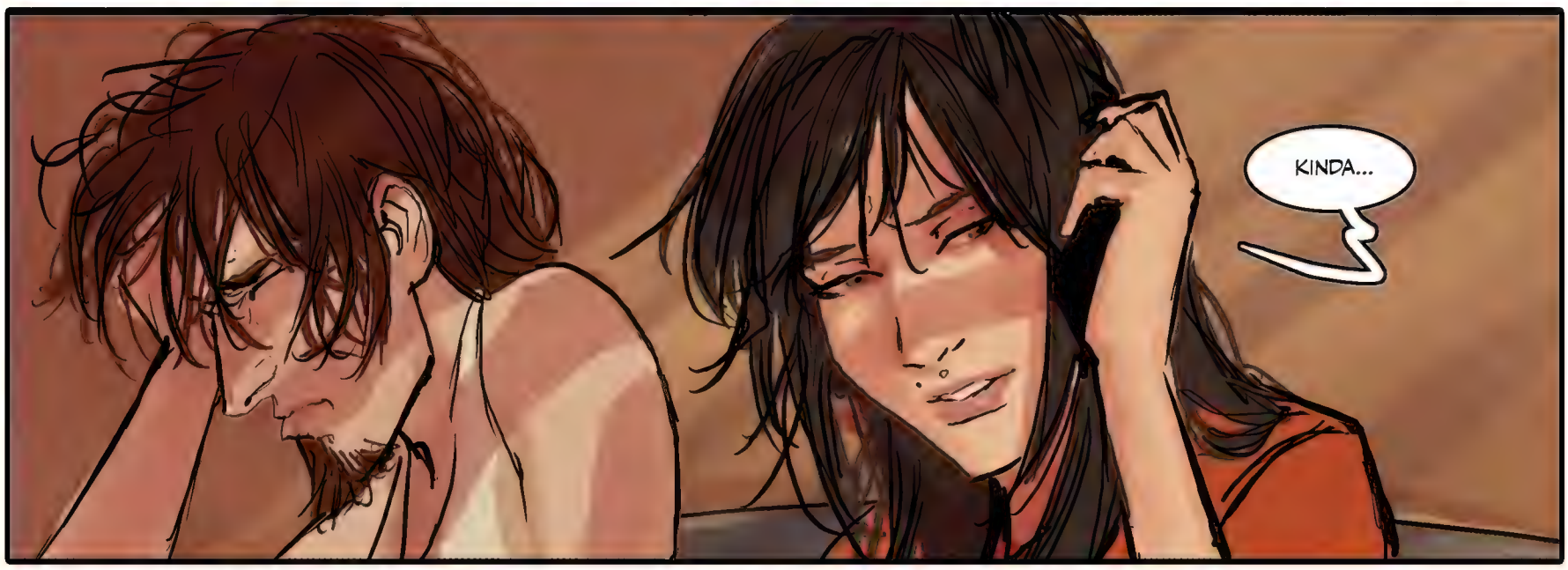
LISA!!!

ARRGH... COME ON!!!
BELELEP


OH...
SIGH...

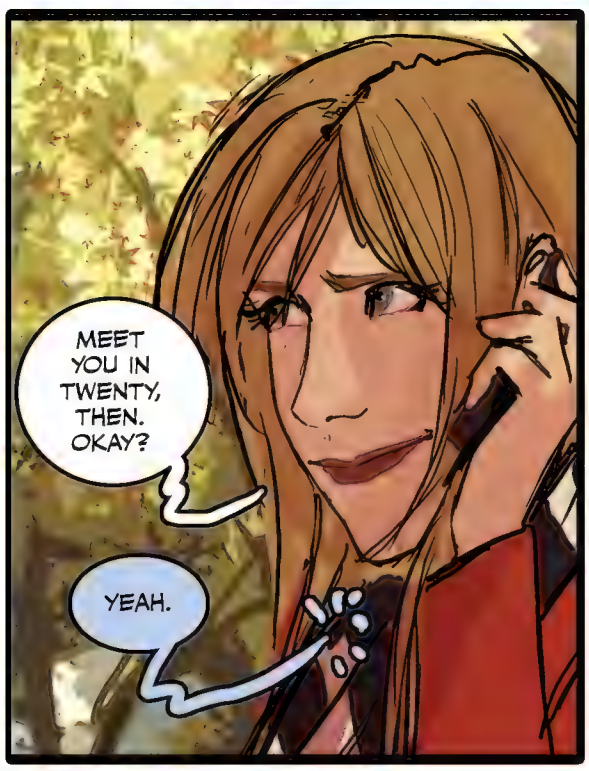

HEY, ANNE.


HOLY CRAP, YOU SOUND *WRECKED!* ROUGH NIGHT?

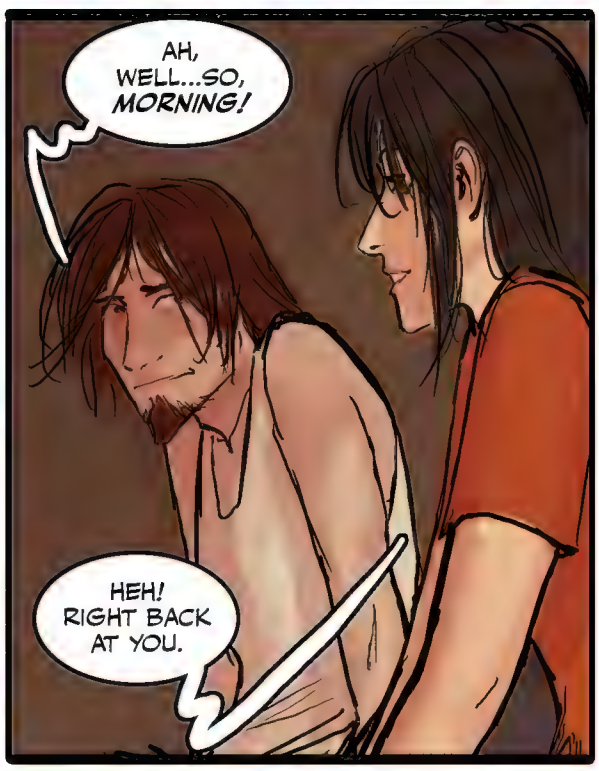

KINDA...

SO, LISTEN! I'M OFF FOR SOME COFFEE AT *THE LAIR,* THAT PLACE WHERE WE GOT ALL SHIT-FACED OUR FIRST NIGHT. WANNA JOIN?

HEH... YOU KNOW WHAT? *SURE!*
I NEED COFFEE... *LOTS* OF IT.

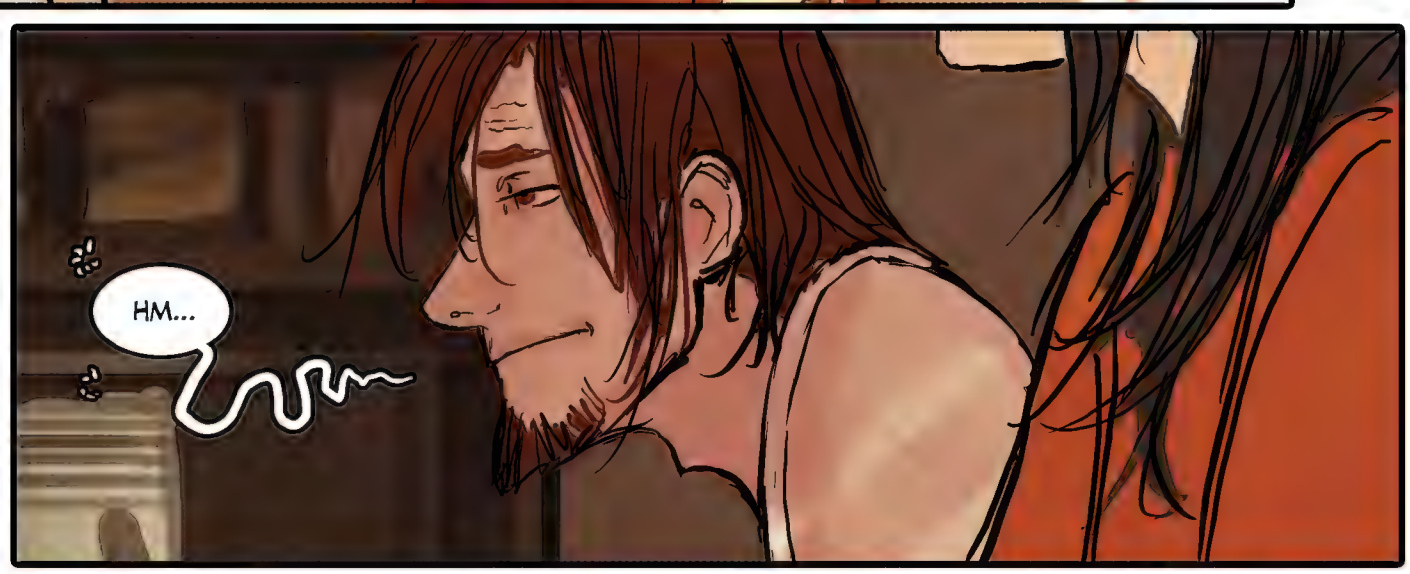

MEET YOU IN TWENTY, THEN. OKAY?
YEAH.

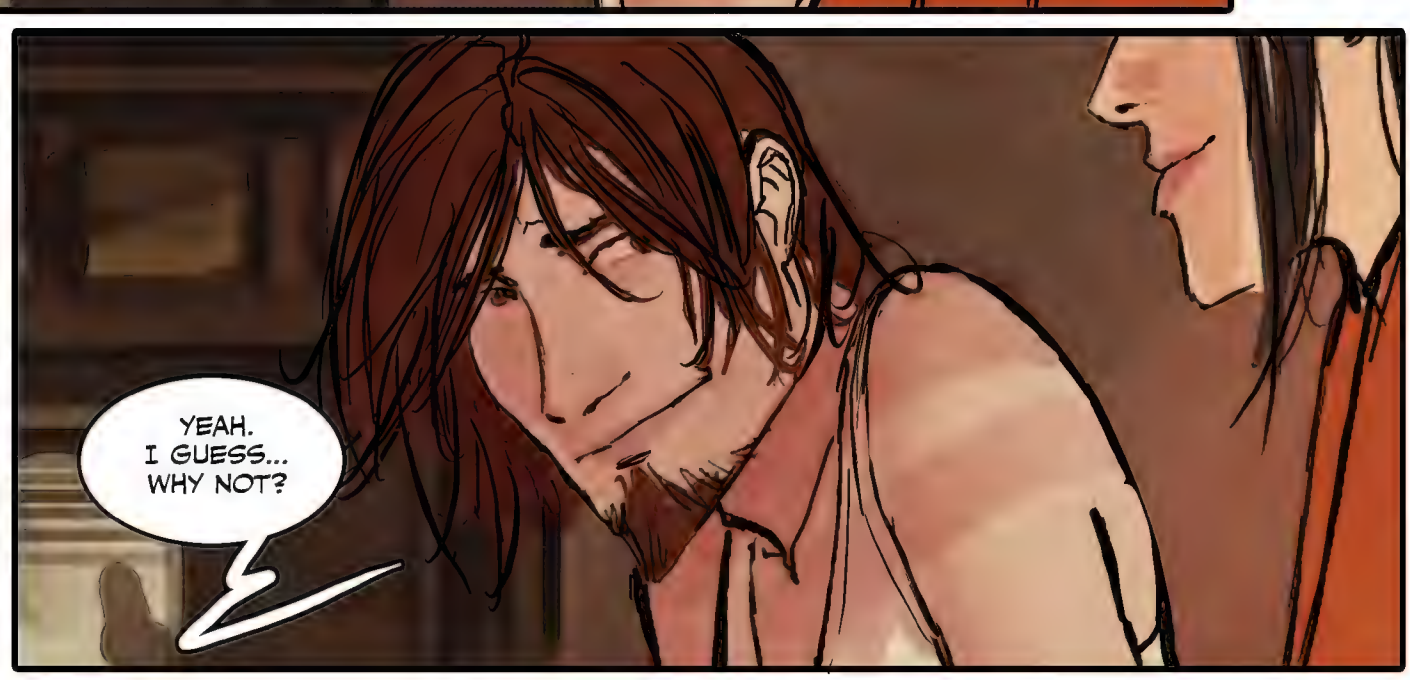
LISA?
NO...

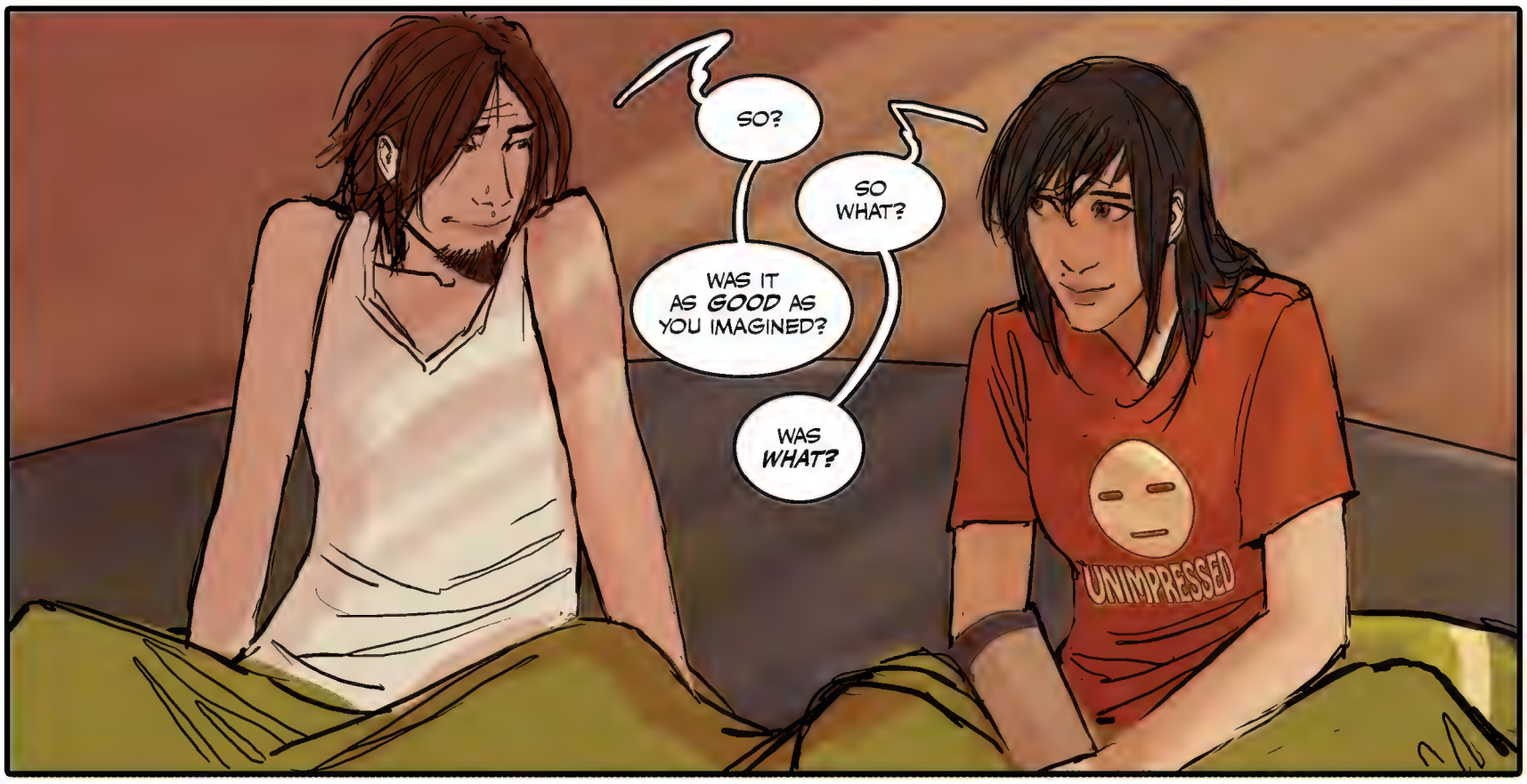

AH, WELL...SO, *MORNING!*
HEH! RIGHT BACK AT YOU.

HOW YOU FEELING?
LIKE THERE IS A DEATH METAL *MOSH PIT* IN MY SINUSES...
UNIMPRESSED

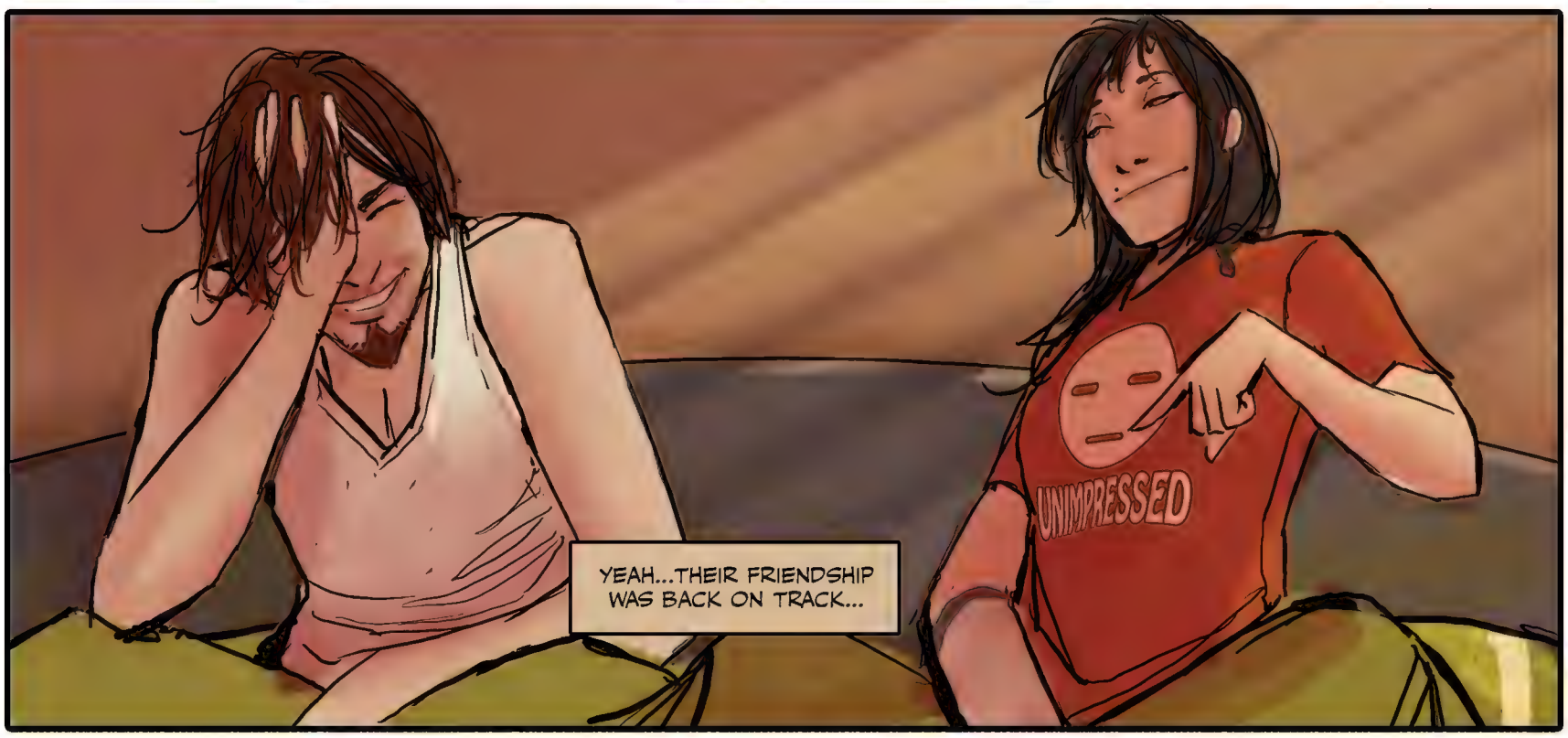
YEAH... SIMILAR CASE HERE.
SO, *HERE'S* A THOUGHT!
YOU WANNA JOIN ME AND A FRIEND FOR SOME *COFFEE?*


HM...

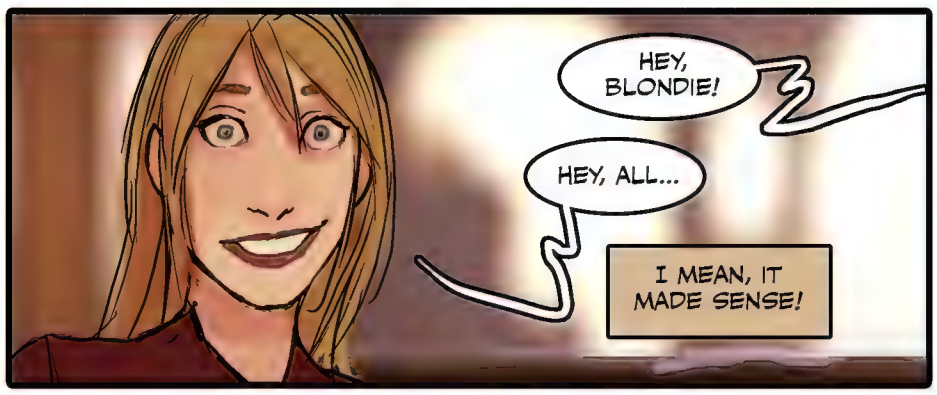

YEAH. I GUESS... WHY NOT?

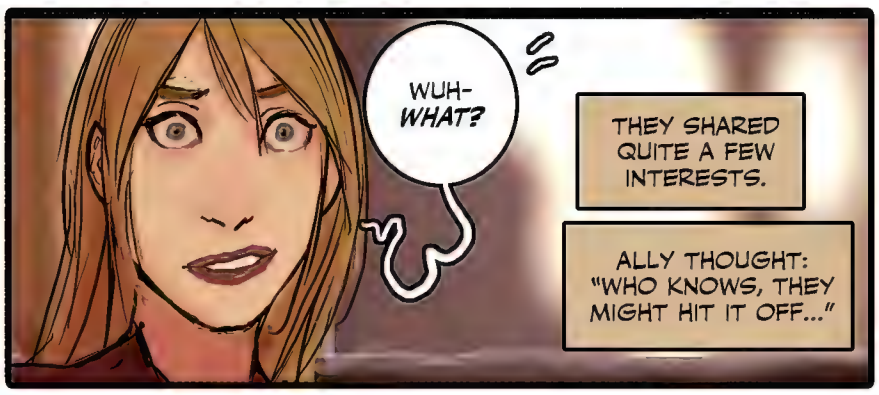

SO?
SO WHAT?
WAS IT AS GOOD AS YOU IMAGINED?
WAS WHAT?
UNIMPRESSED

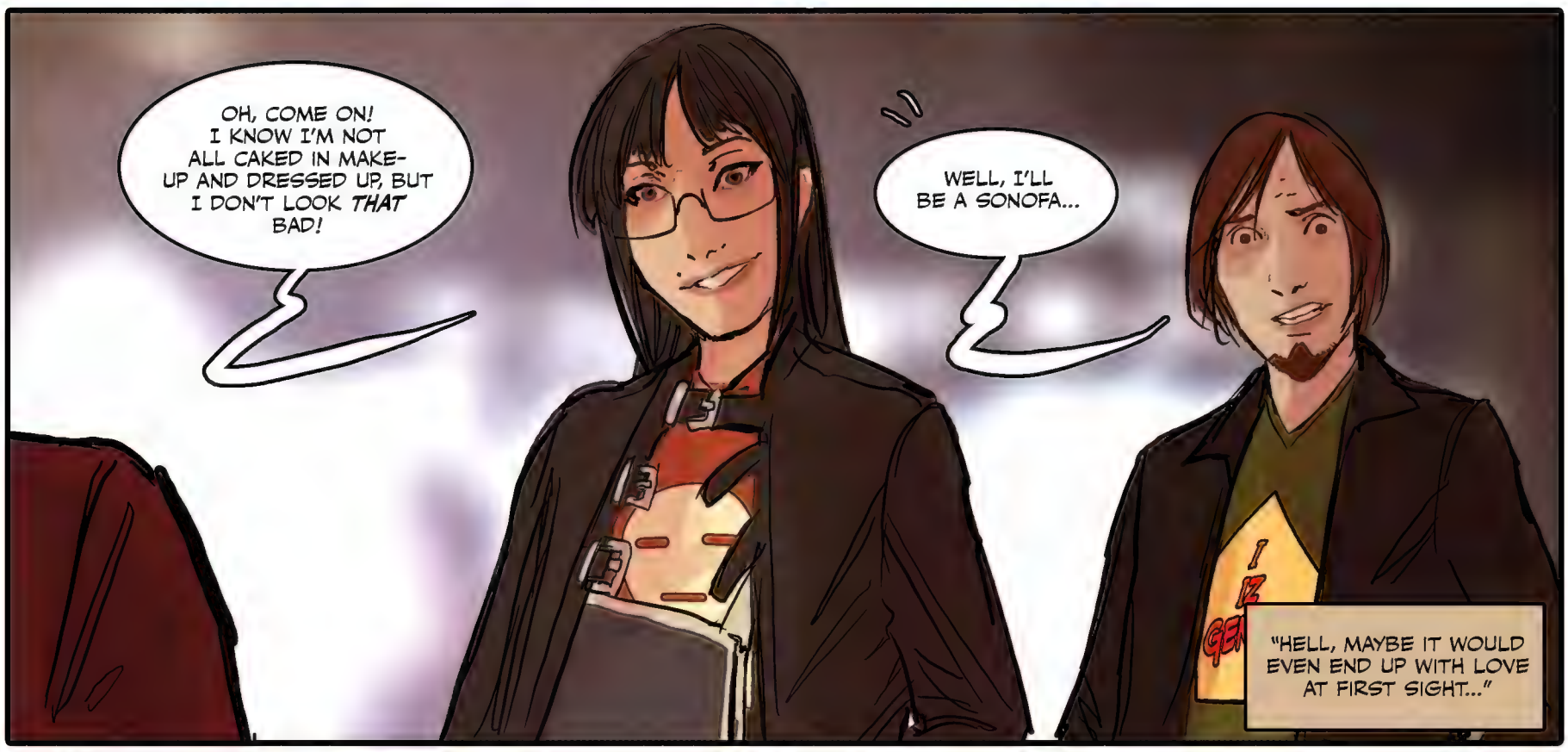
SLEEPING WITH ME AGAIN!

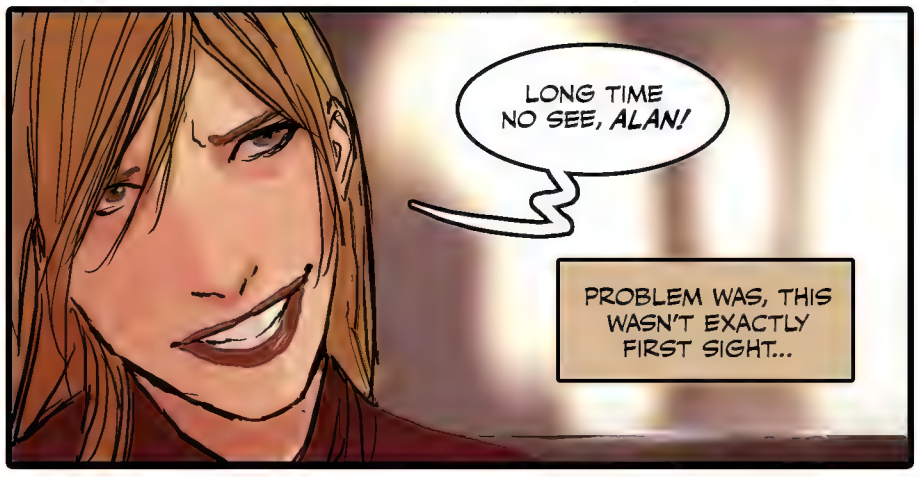

YEAH...THEIR FRIENDSHIP WAS BACK ON TRACK...
UNIMPRESSED

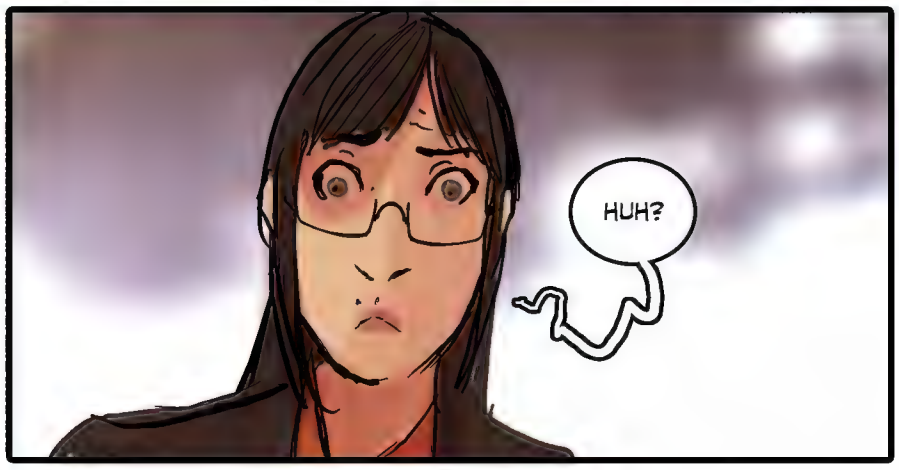
SO, FUNNY THING! ALLY THOUGHT: "HEY, MY BEST FRIEND IS LONELY! MIGHT AS WELL INTRODUCE HIM TO THIS COOL GIRL I KNOW!"

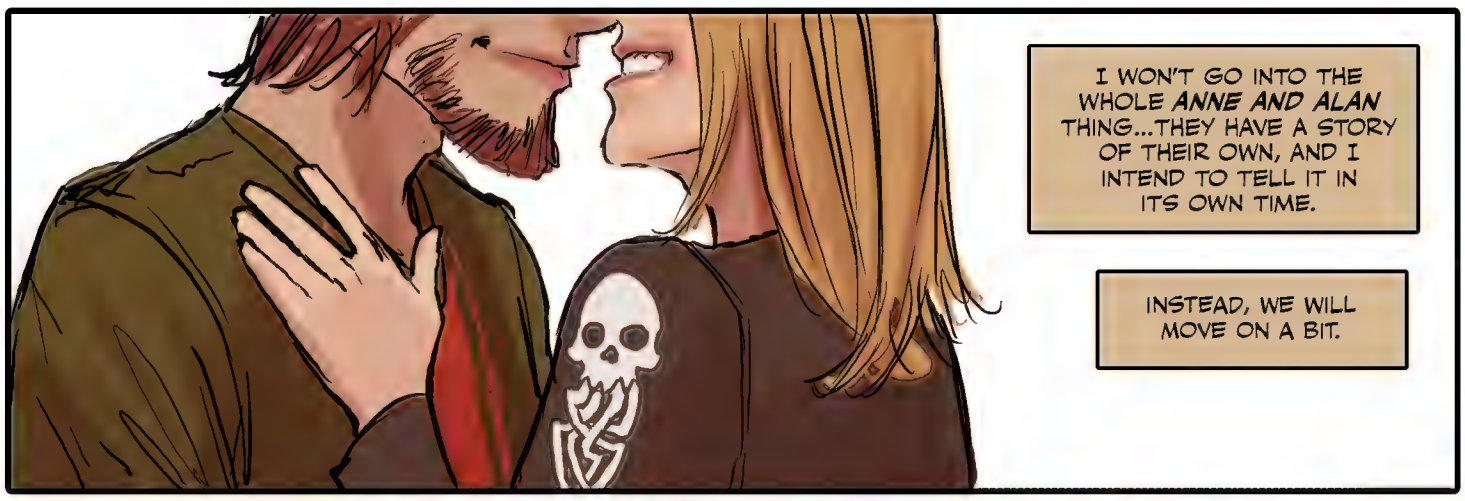


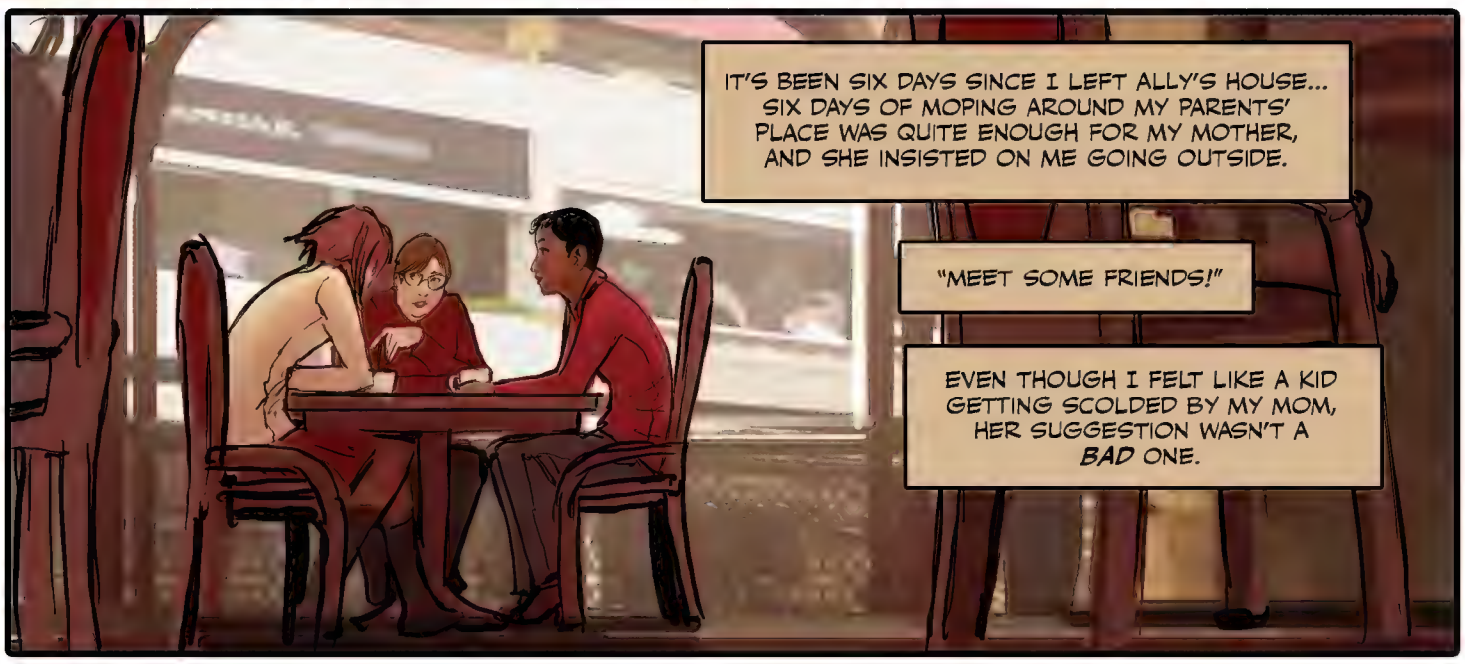






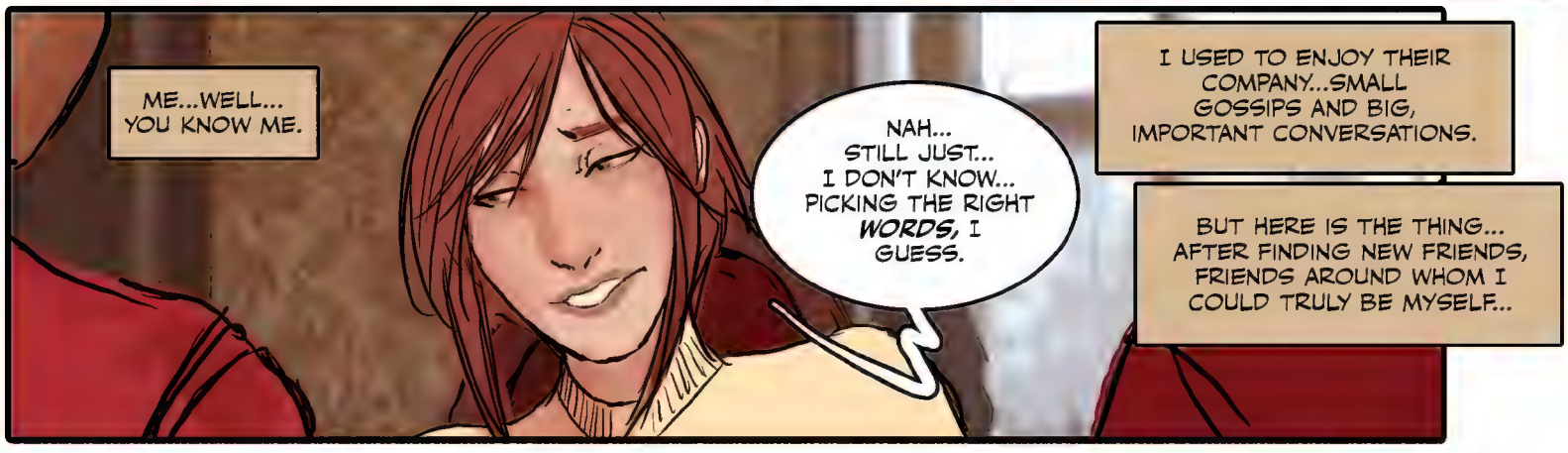


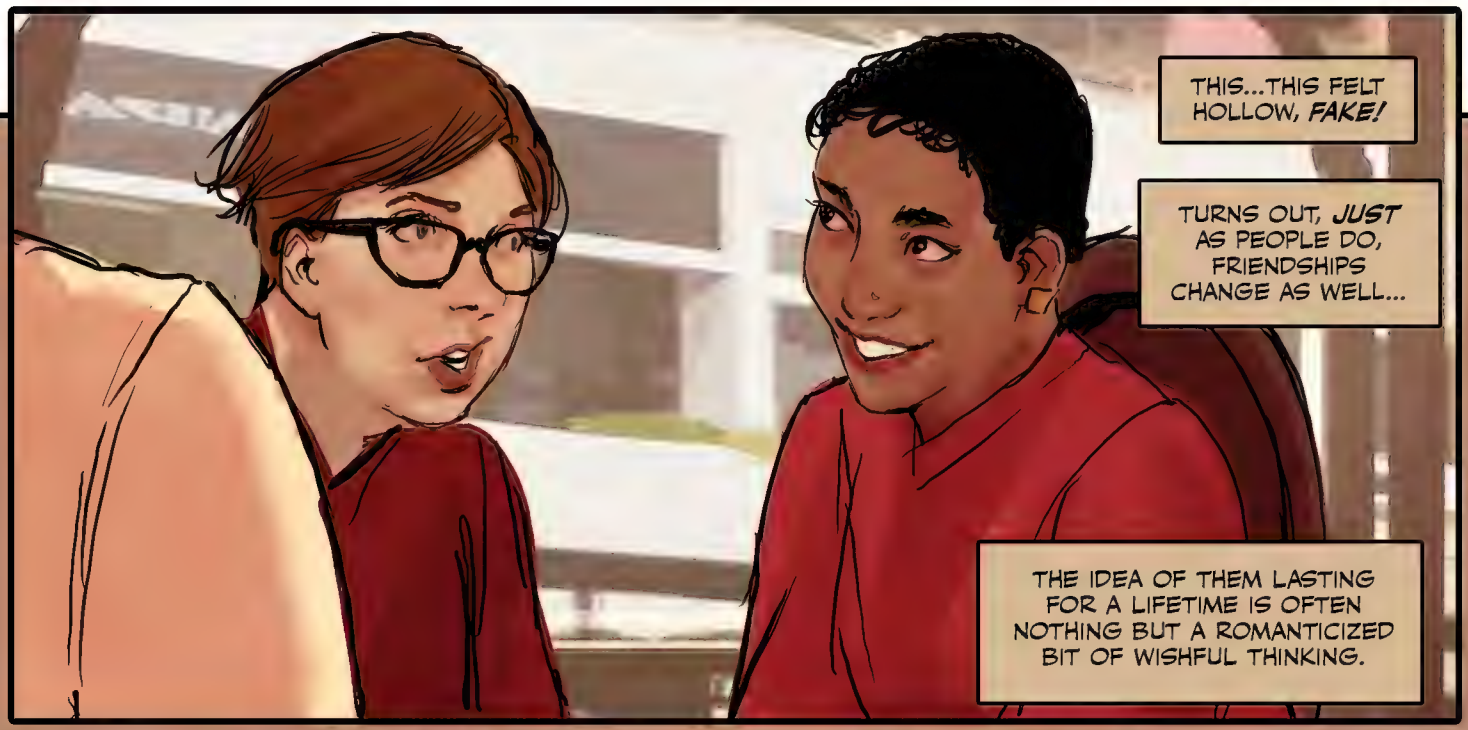

I WON'T GO INTO THE WHOLE *ANNE AND ALAN* THING...THEY HAVE A STORY OF THEIR OWN, AND I INTEND TO TELL IT IN ITS OWN TIME.
INSTEAD, WE WILL MOVE ON A BIT.

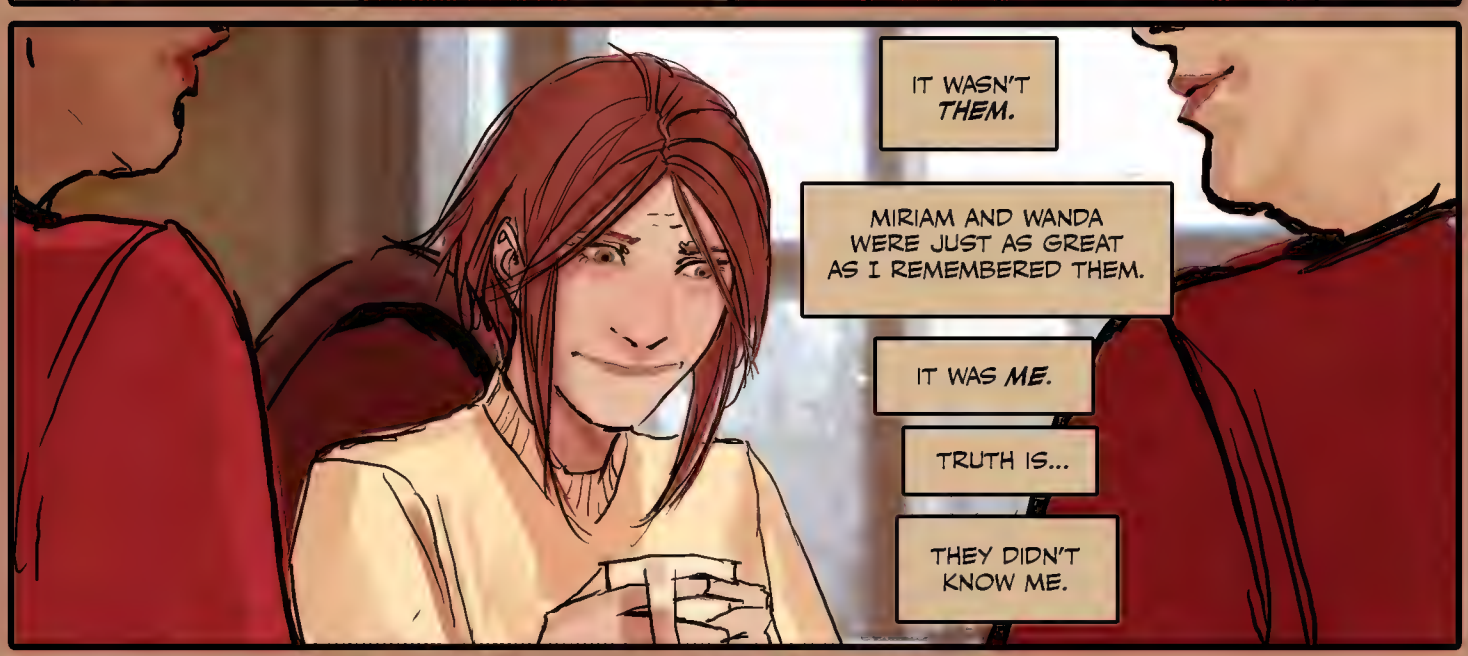

IT'S BEEN SIX DAYS SINCE I LEFT ALLY'S HOUSE... SIX DAYS OF MOPING AROUND MY PARENTS' PLACE WAS QUITE ENOUGH FOR MY MOTHER, AND SHE INSISTED ON ME GOING OUTSIDE.
"MEET SOME FRIENDS!"
EVEN THOUGH I FELT LIKE A KID GETTING SCOLDED BY MY MOM, HER SUGGESTION WASN'T A *BAD* ONE.

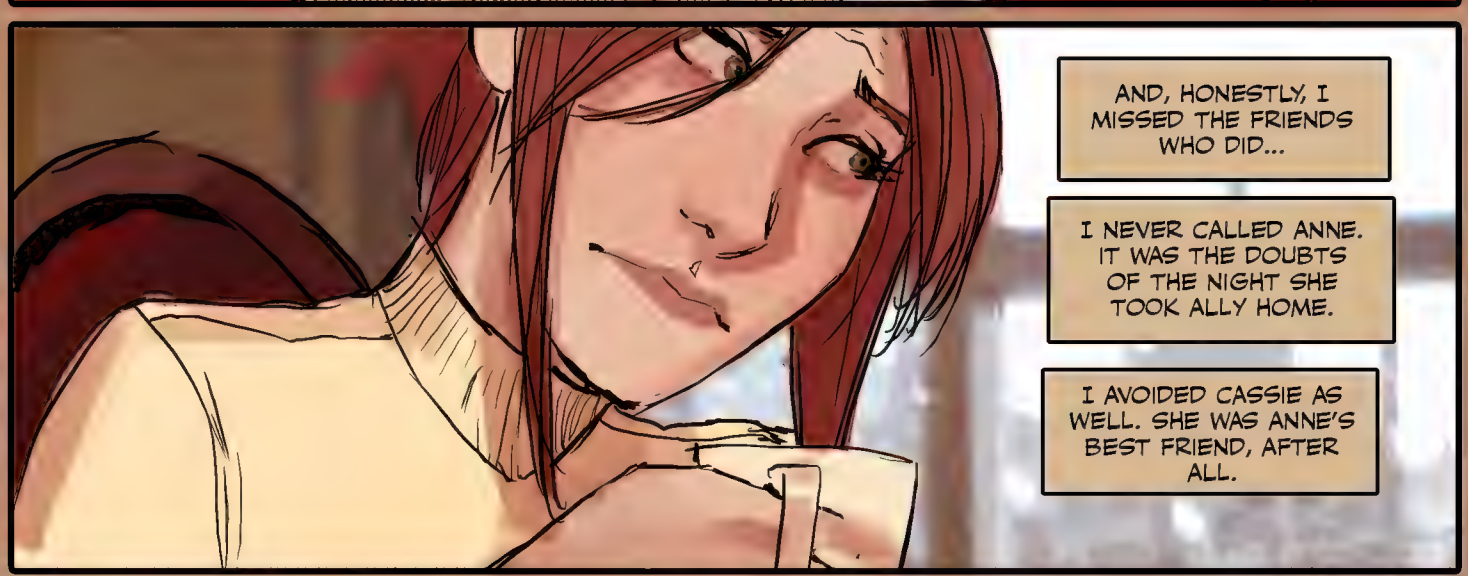
SO, THESE TWO LADIES ARE *MIRIAM* AND *WANDA*...THEY WERE MY FRIENDS FOR YEARS.
BOTH ASPIRING WRITERS. WE MET DURING MY *BRIEF* ATTEMPT AT FREQUENTING CREATIVE WRITING CLASSES.

MIRIAM IS NOW AN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AT A BIG NEWSPAPER.
WANDA, A PROFESSIONAL SCREENWRITER.
...I HAVE NO REGRETS.
SO, WHAT ABOUT *YOUR* WRITING?
PUBLISHED ANYTHING?


ME...WELL... YOU KNOW ME.
NAH... STILL JUST... I DON'T KNOW... PICKING THE RIGHT *WORDS*, I GUESS.
I USED TO ENJOY THEIR COMPANY...SMALL GOSSIPS AND BIG, IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS.
BUT HERE IS THE THING... AFTER FINDING NEW FRIENDS, FRIENDS AROUND WHOM I COULD TRULY BE MYSELF...







I WANTED TO GO *HOME.*

DA-DING-DONG

JUST A...

HEY!

....
HEY, ANNE.

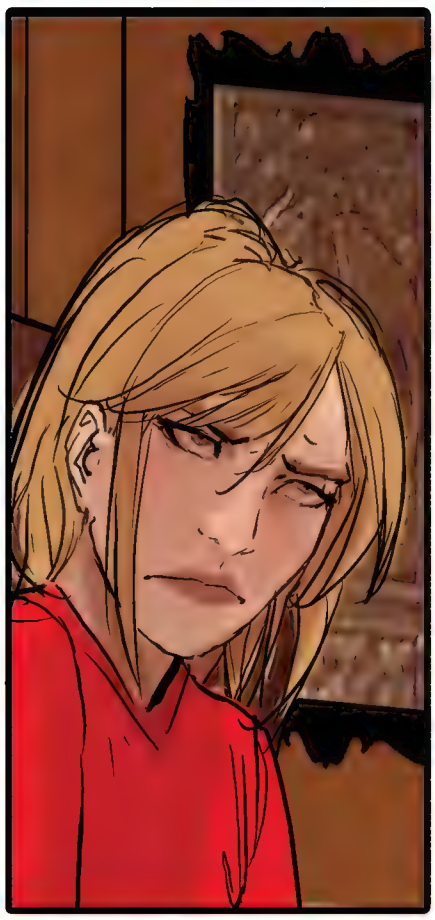
UMM...*BAD* TIME?

MEH, IT'S RARELY A GOOD TIME THESE DAYS.
COME IN!

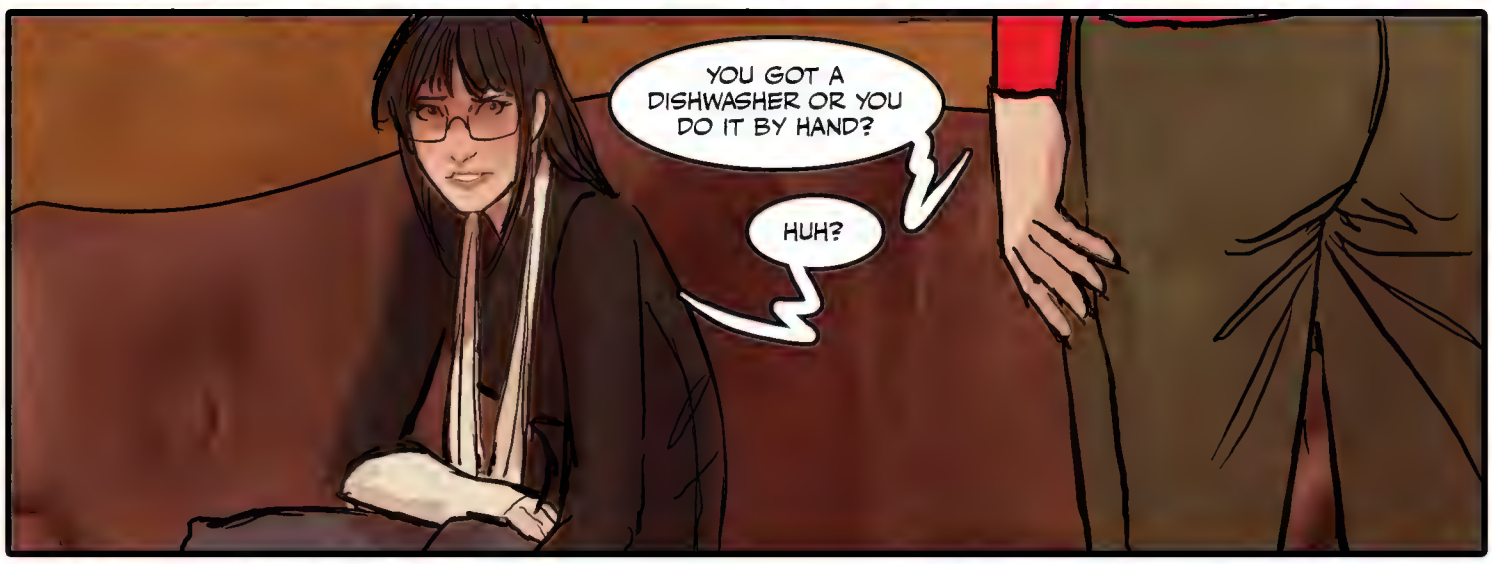
SORRY 'BOUT THE MESS...DEADLINES AND A MESSED-UP ARM...HAD TO PRIORITIZE.

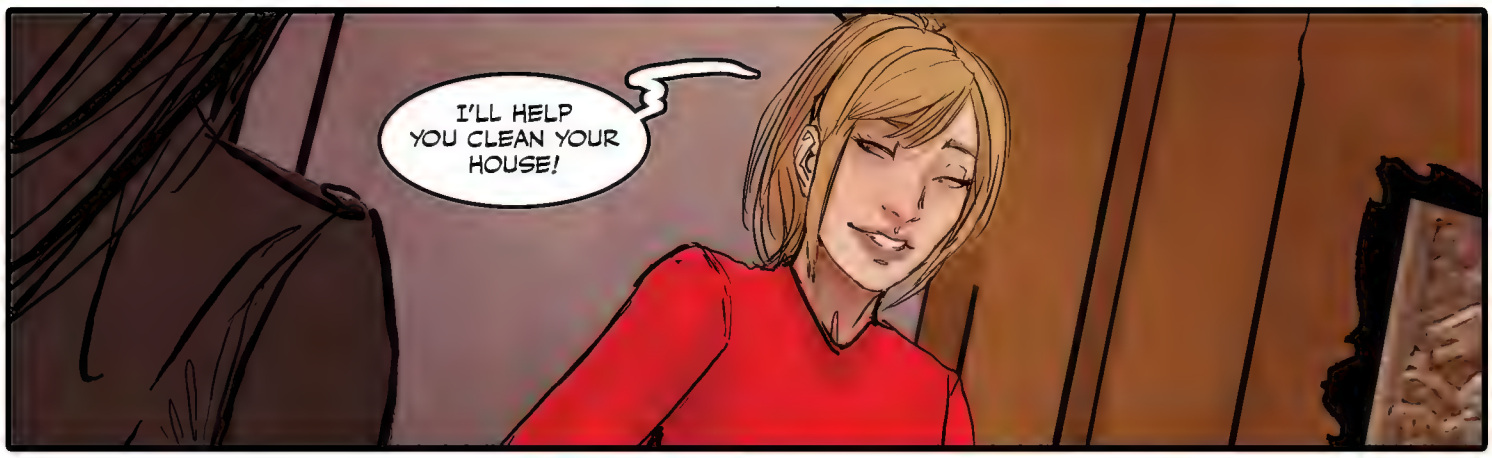
IT'S...NOT THAT BAD.
MMYEAH...
SO, WHERE WERE YOU? I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM YOU SINCE THAT DAY WITH ALAN.
LIKE I SAID, DEADLINES.
AND...YOUR ARM ANY BETTER?
MAYBE...I DON'T KNOW...IT'S OKAY WHEN I KEEP IT ELEVATED, BUT IF I DON'T, IT POUNDS WITH PAIN WHEN I WALK.
DIDN'T YOU HAVE THAT ARM-CRADLE THING?
BROKE THE BUCKLE...PLASTIC PIECE OF CRAP...
LISA STILL NOT BACK?
HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER...I GOT A FEW MESSAGES THE DAY AFTER OUR FALLOUT...NOTHING SINCE THEN.

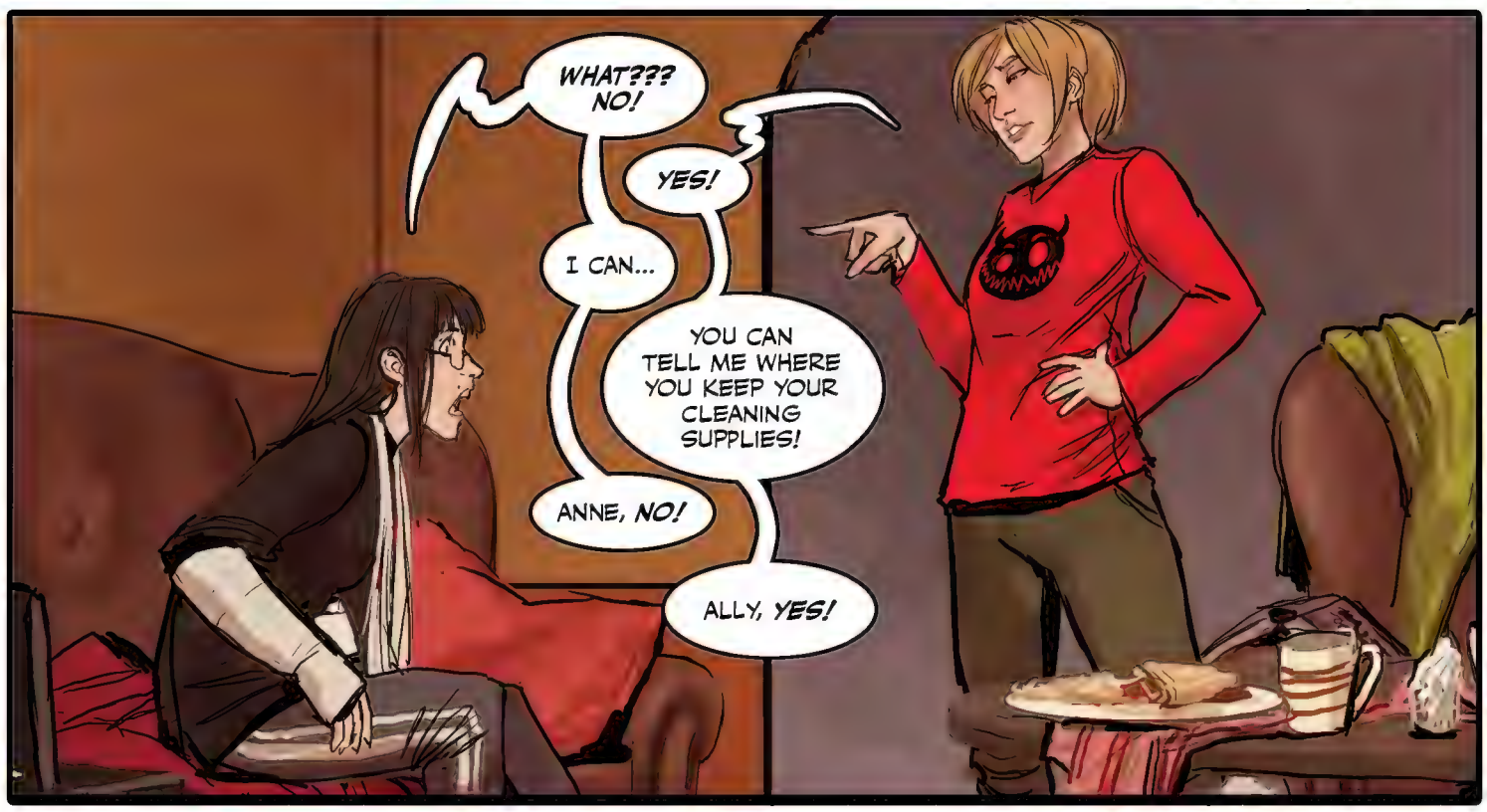
YEAH...
WELL...I GOT NO MESSAGES.

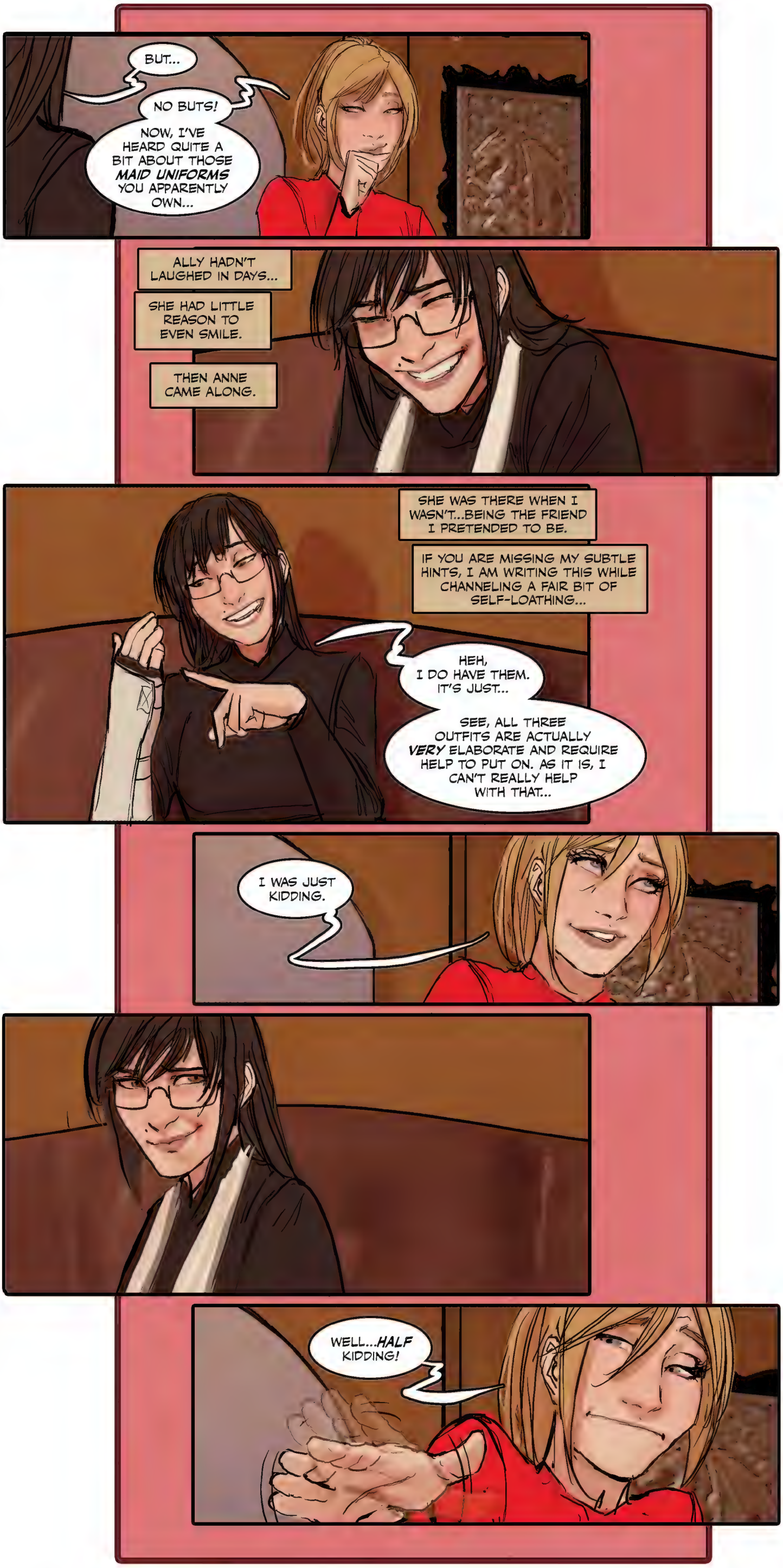


FUCK HER!
I DESERVED THAT, AND MORE.


YOU GOT A DISHWASHER OR YOU DO IT BY HAND?
HUH?


I'LL HELP YOU CLEAN YOUR HOUSE!


WHAT??? NO!
YES!
I CAN...
YOU CAN TELL ME WHERE YOU KEEP YOUR CLEANING SUPPLIES!
ANNE, NO!
ALLY, YES!


BUT...
NO BUTS!
NOW, I'VE HEARD QUITE A BIT ABOUT THOSE *MAID UNIFORMS* YOU APPARENTLY OWN...
ALLY HADN'T LAUGHED IN DAYS...
SHE HAD LITTLE REASON TO EVEN SMILE.
THEN ANNE CAME ALONG.
SHE WAS THERE WHEN I WASN'T...BEING THE FRIEND I PRETENDED TO BE.
IF YOU ARE MISSING MY SUBTLE HINTS, I AM WRITING THIS WHILE CHANNELING A FAIR BIT OF SELF-LOATHING...
HEH, I DO HAVE THEM. IT'S JUST...
SEE, ALL THREE OUTFITS ARE ACTUALLY *VERY* ELABORATE AND REQUIRE HELP TO PUT ON. AS IT IS, I CAN'T REALLY HELP WITH THAT...
I WAS JUST KIDDING.
WELL...*HALF* KIDDING!

ANNE HAD INTENDED TO DROP BY FOR A QUICK VISIT THAT DAY.

JUST TO CHECK UP ON ALLY...

HOWEVER, THAT PLAN GOT TRASHED FAST.

PLAN B WAS NICE, THOUGH...

IT'S A REALLY COOL SKETCH COLLECTION!

SO?

RIGHT!? YOU WANNA CONTRIBUTE TO IT?

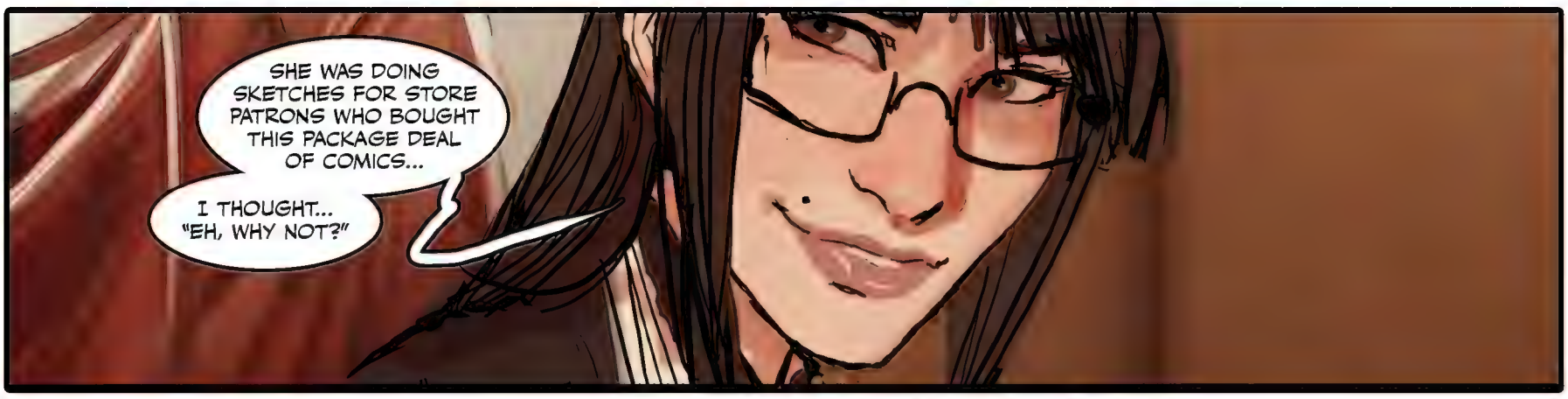
WE'LL WORK SOMETHING OUT!

SOO...THIS DOMINATRIX-CAT THING... SEEMS TO BE A THEME OF YOUR COLLECTION.

HEH...

YEAH...I GUESS...

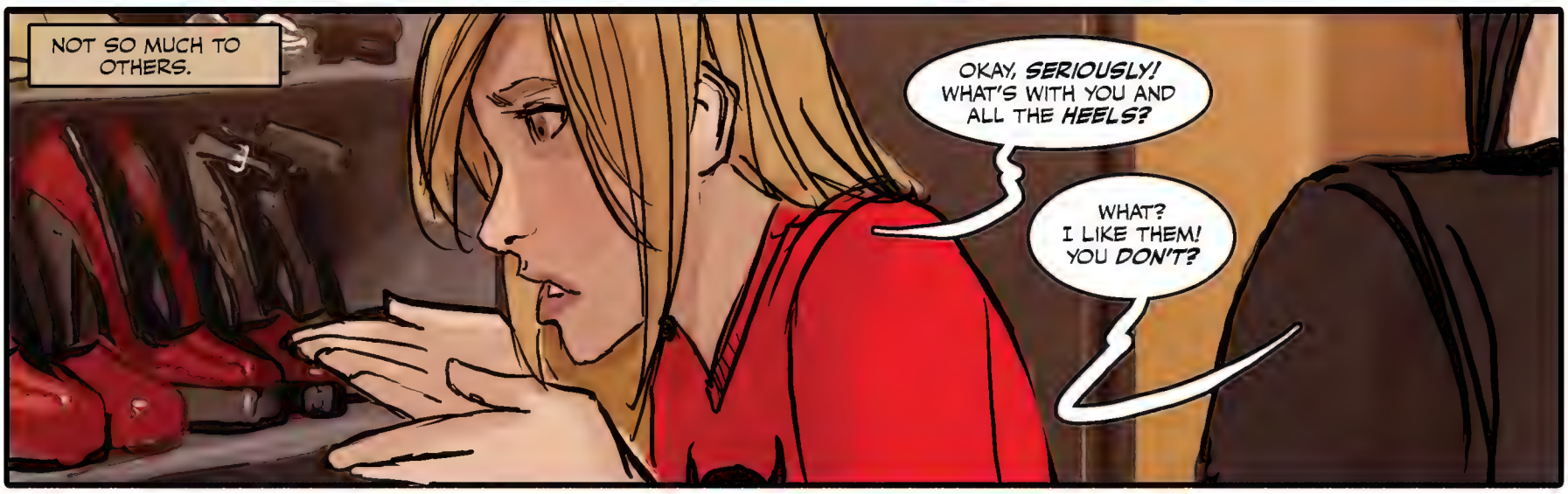
THING IS, I WAS VISITING MY COMIC BOOK STORE AND THEY HAD THIS LOCAL ARTIST THERE WHO WAS APPARENTLY KNOWN FOR DRAWING SOME "TALKING ANIMALS" COMIC...

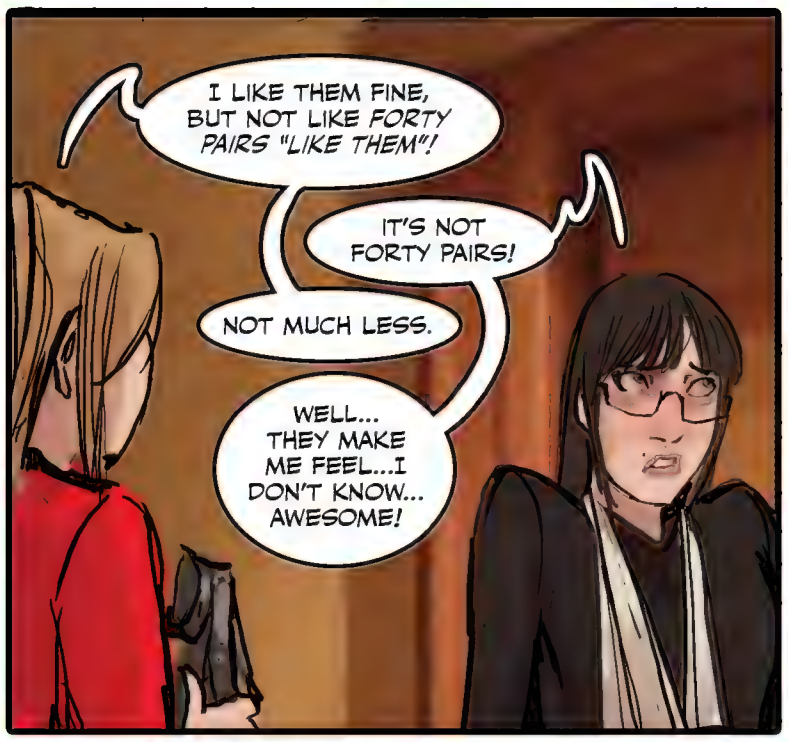

SHE WAS DOING SKETCHES FOR STORE PATRONS WHO BOUGHT THIS PACKAGE DEAL OF COMICS...
I THOUGHT... "EH, WHY NOT?"

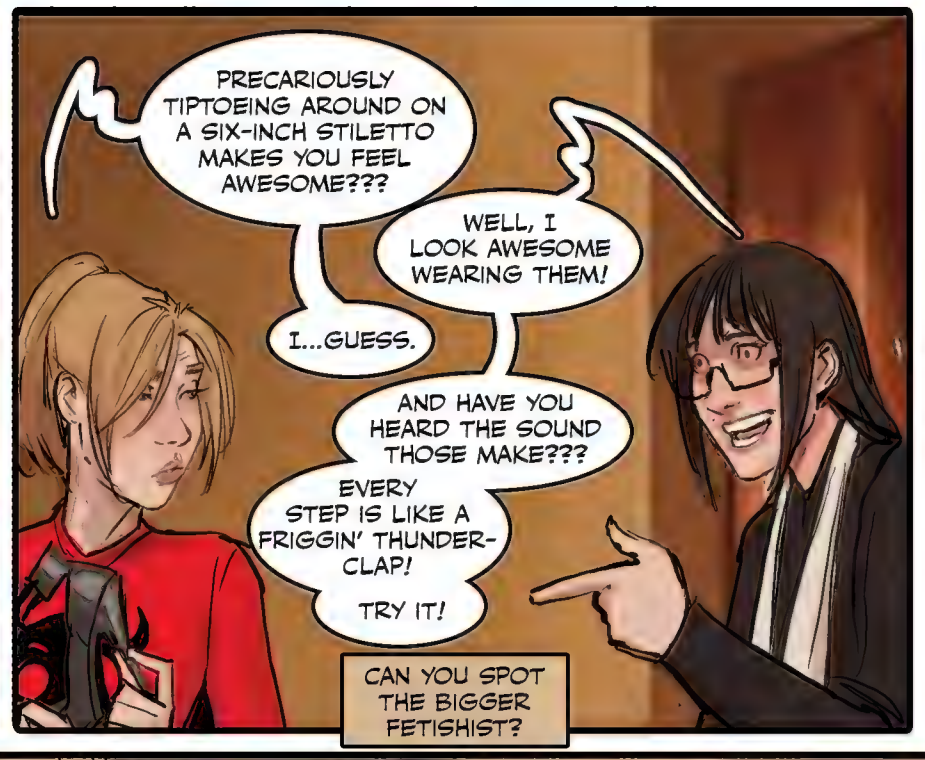
SO, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR A SKETCH?
FOR YEARS NOW, WHEREVER I COULD, I WOULD NAME MY FORUM AND VIDEOGAME ACCOUNTS "*ALLYCAT...*"

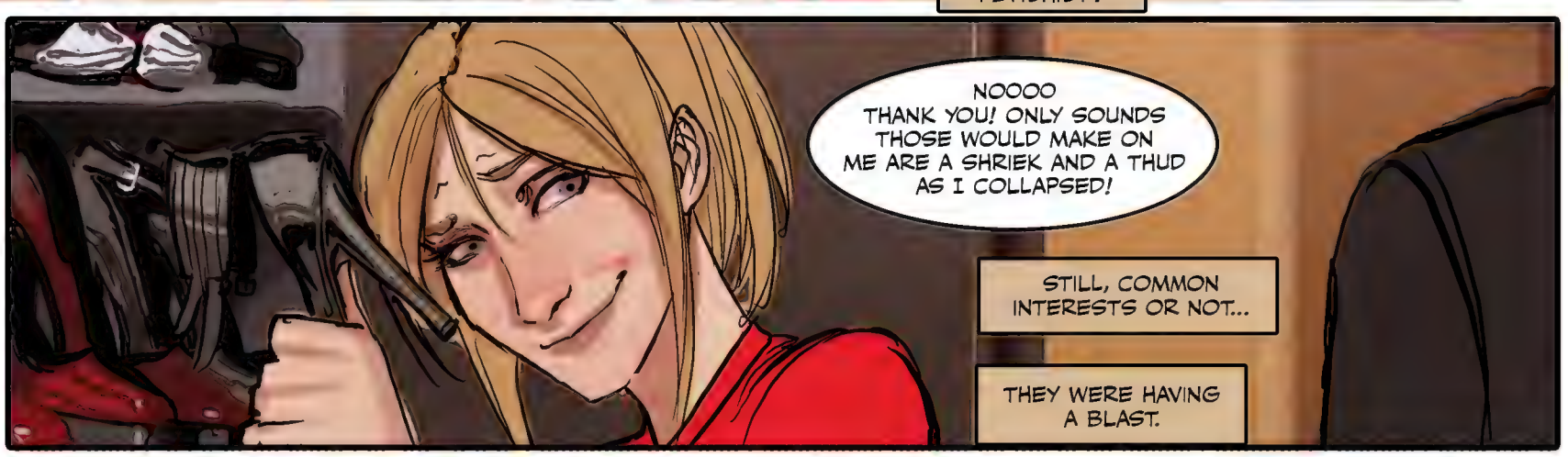
SO I FIGURED...
UMM...IF IT'S NOT TOO MUCH...UMM ME AS A...CAT...UMM... *DOMINATRIX...*
ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER AND NOW I HAVE A COLLECTION OF COMIC BOOK DOMINATRIX CATS! NOW, SPEAKING OF COMICS, I DID SAY YOU NEEDED TO READ SOME OF MINE!

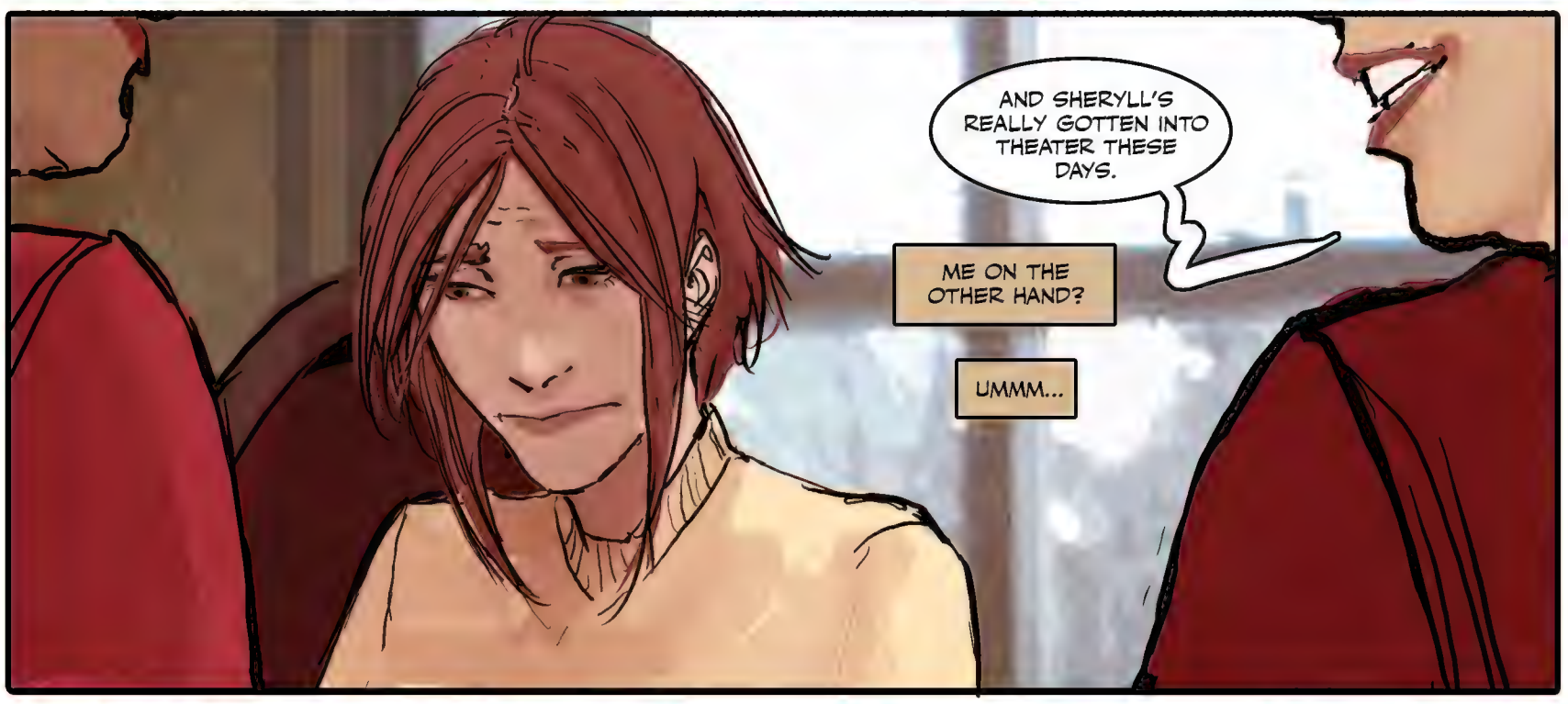
SO, YOU'LL NEED TO READ THIS ONE AND THIS ONE!
WHAT ABOUT THIS?
FILLER GARBAGE!
GOOD ART, THOUGH!
IT TURNED OUT TO BE AN UNEXPECTEDLY FUN DAY FOR ALLY.
LIKE ME, ANNE RELATED TO SOME OF HER INTERESTS...

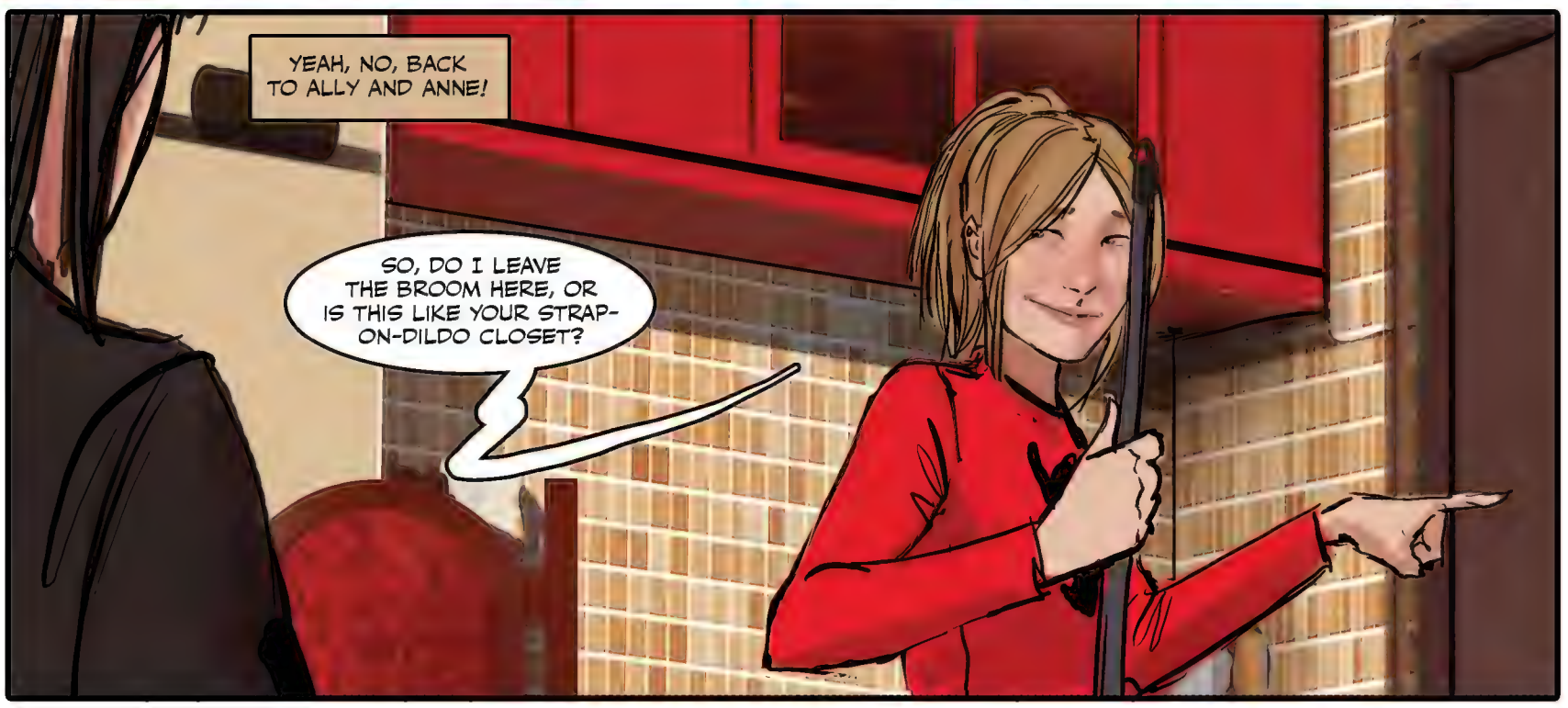

NOT SO MUCH TO OTHERS.
OKAY, *SERIOUSLY!* WHAT'S WITH YOU AND ALL THE *HEELS?*
WHAT? I LIKE THEM! YOU *DON'T?*

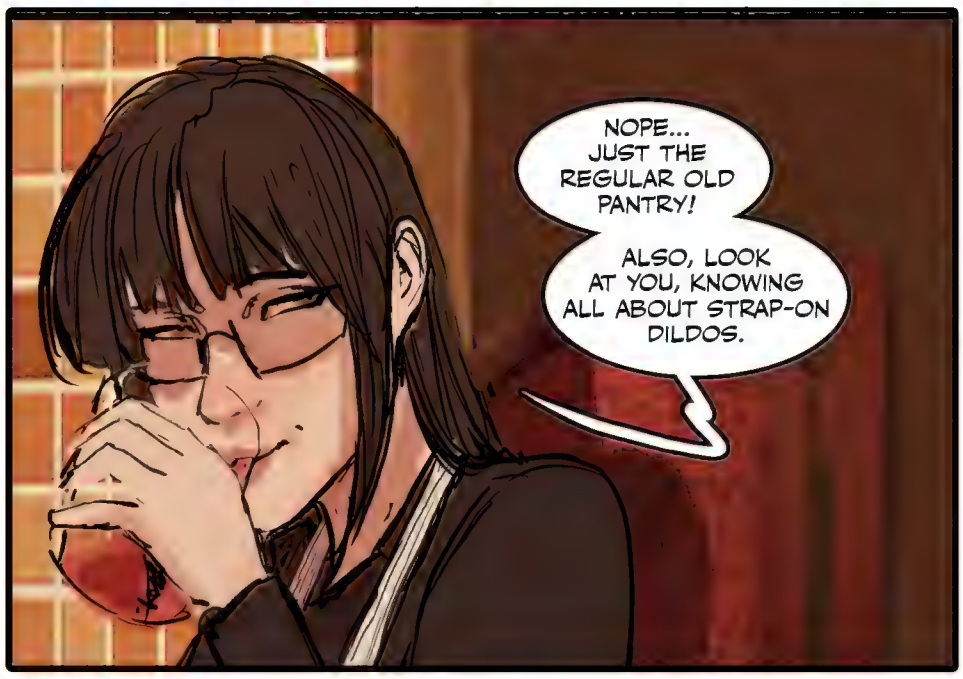

I LIKE THEM FINE, BUT NOT LIKE *FORTY PAIRS "LIKE THEM"*!
IT'S NOT FORTY PAIRS!
NOT MUCH LESS.
WELL... THEY MAKE ME FEEL...I DON'T KNOW... AWESOME!

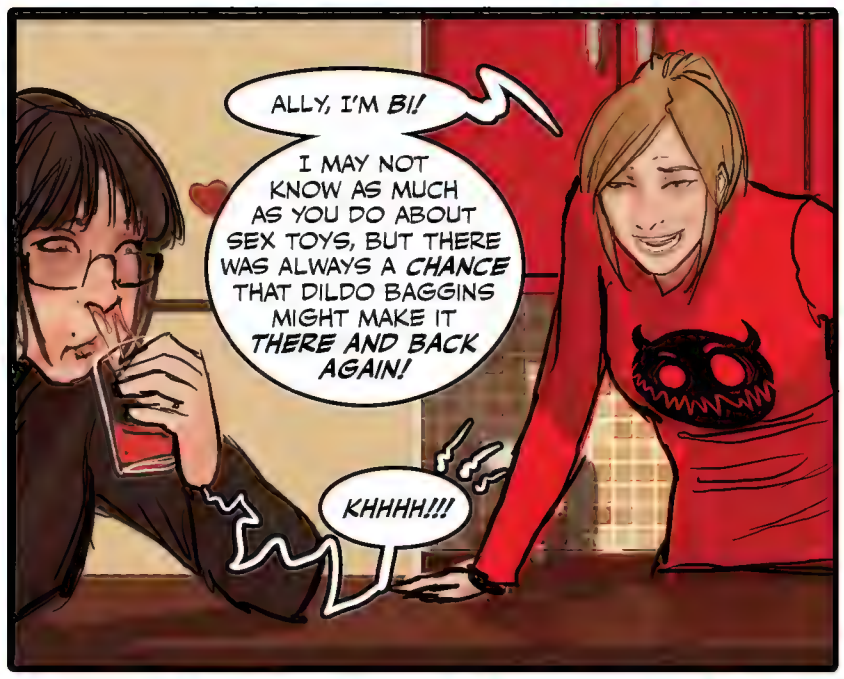

PRECARIOUSLY TIPTOEING AROUND ON A SIX-INCH STILETTO MAKES YOU FEEL AWESOME???
WELL, I LOOK AWESOME WEARING THEM!
I...GUESS.
AND HAVE YOU HEARD THE SOUND THOSE MAKE???
EVERY STEP IS LIKE A FRIGGIN' THUNDER-CLAP!
TRY IT!
CAN YOU SPOT THE BIGGER FETISHIST?


NOOOO THANK YOU! ONLY SOUNDS THOSE WOULD MAKE ON ME ARE A SHRIEK AND A THUD AS I COLLAPSED!
STILL, COMMON INTERESTS OR NOT...
THEY WERE HAVING A BLAST.

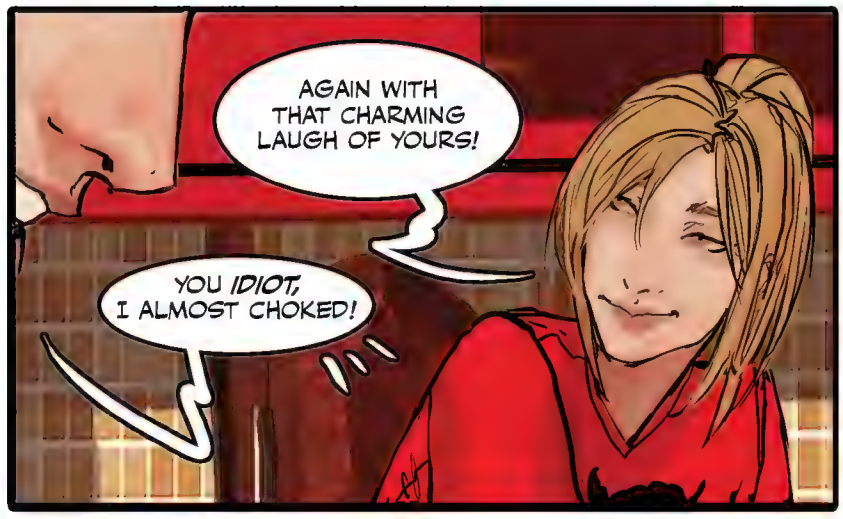

AND SHERYLL'S REALLY GOTTEN INTO THEATER THESE DAYS.
ME ON THE OTHER HAND?
UMMM...

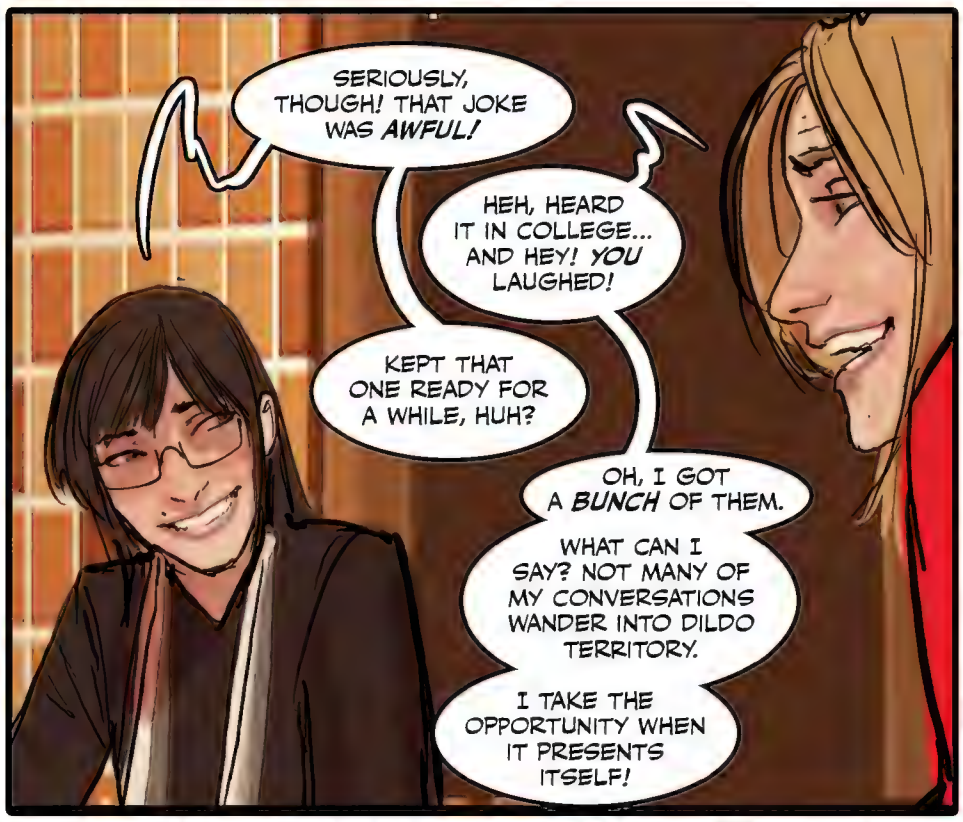

YEAH, NO, BACK TO ALLY AND ANNE!
SO, DO I LEAVE THE BROOM HERE, OR IS THIS LIKE YOUR STRAP-ON-DILDO CLOSET?

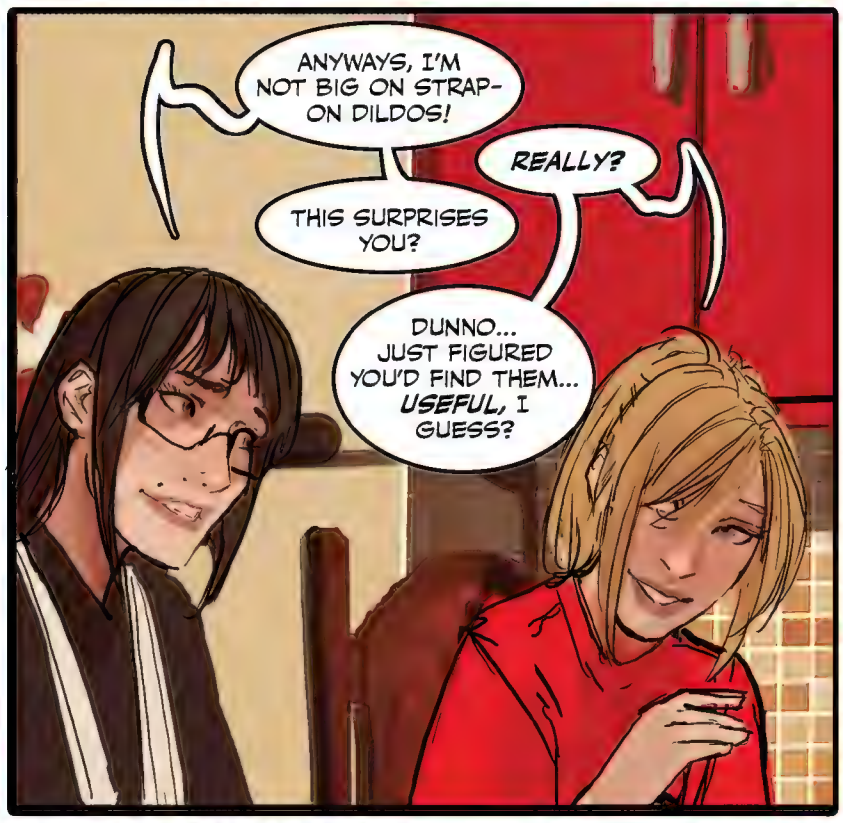

NOPE... JUST THE REGULAR OLD PANTRY!
ALSO, LOOK AT YOU, KNOWING ALL ABOUT STRAP-ON DILDOS.


ALLY, I'M *BI!*
I MAY NOT KNOW AS MUCH AS YOU DO ABOUT SEX TOYS, BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS A *CHANCE* THAT DILDO BAGGINS MIGHT MAKE IT *THERE AND BACK AGAIN!*
KHHHH!!!

GHWAKKK COUGH!!!


AGAIN WITH THAT CHARMING LAUGH OF YOURS!
YOU *IDIOT,* I ALMOST CHOKED!


SERIOUSLY, THOUGH! THAT JOKE WAS *AWFUL!*
HEH, HEARD IT IN COLLEGE... AND HEY! *YOU* LAUGHED!
KEPT THAT ONE READY FOR A WHILE, HUH?
OH, I GOT A *BUNCH* OF THEM.
WHAT CAN I SAY? NOT MANY OF MY CONVERSATIONS WANDER INTO DILDO TERRITORY.
I TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY WHEN IT PRESENTS ITSELF!


ANYWAYS, I'M NOT BIG ON STRAP-ON DILDOS!
REALLY?
THIS SURPRISES YOU?
DUNNO... JUST FIGURED YOU'D FIND THEM... *USEFUL,* I GUESS?

I MEAN...YEAH, THEY ARE *THAT.*
FUNNY THING IS, I'VE ONLY USED ONE LIKE TWO OR THREE TIMES SO FAR.

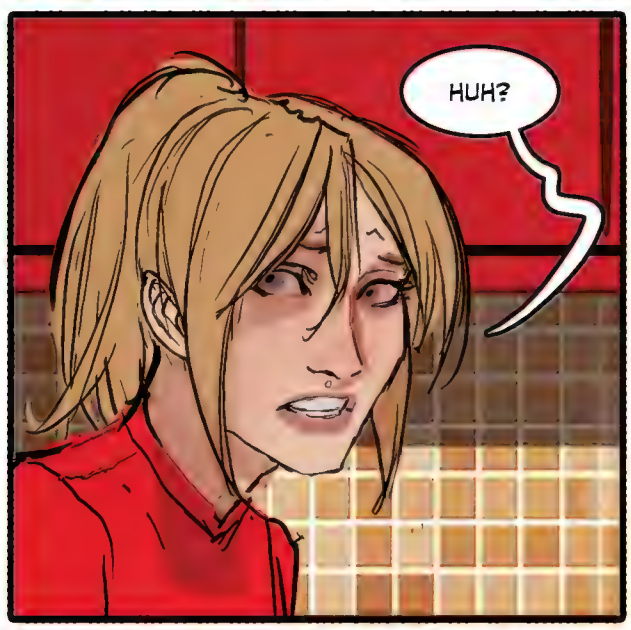
BUT...WHEN THE TWO OF YOU TOLD ME OF YOUR, UM...ADVENTURES, MOST OF THEM INCLUDED YOU USING A STRAP...

IT'D BEEN A FEW HOURS SINCE SHE THOUGHT OF ME...

RIGHT... TOUCHY SUBJECT.

NAH, IT'S OKAY...

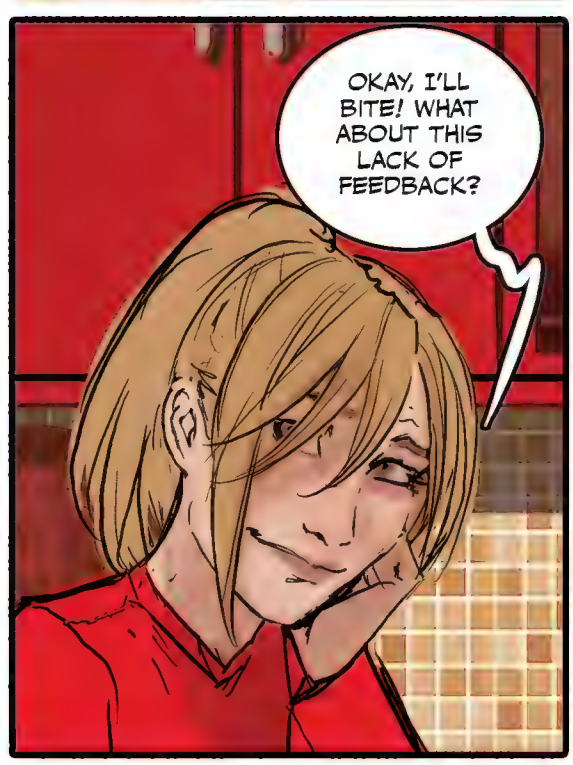
IT'S THE LACK OF FEEDBACK FOR ME...


HUH?

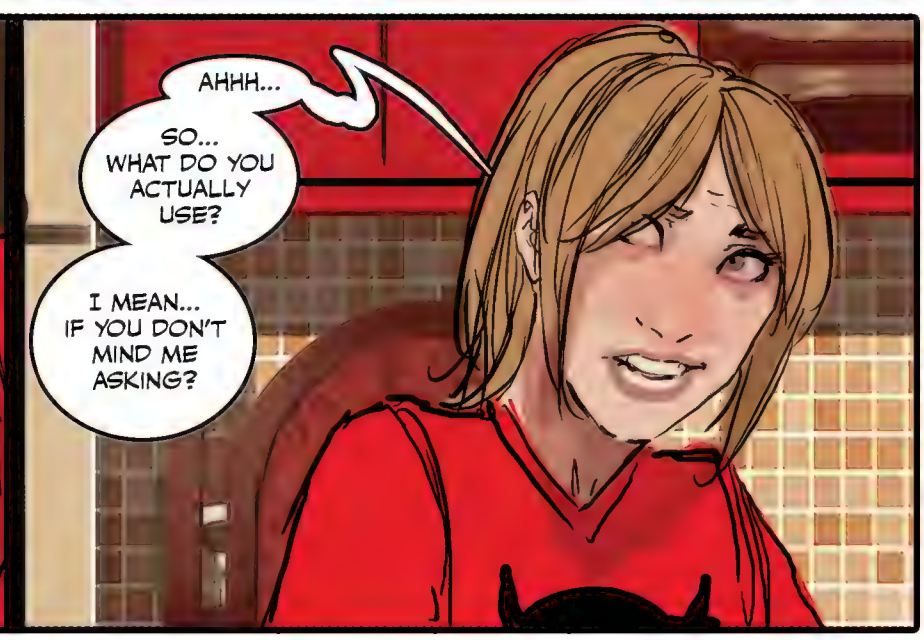
WHY I DON'T REALLY LIKE STRAP-ON DILDOS ALL THAT MUCH...

NICE SEGUE...

SHRUG


OKAY, I'LL BITE! WHAT ABOUT THIS LACK OF FEEDBACK?

I DON'T REALLY...GET THAT MUCH FROM IT.
LIKE... YOU KNOW... STIMULATION-WISE.
SOME LOVE IT...ME? I DON'T KNOW...NOT SO MUCH.


AHHH...
SO... WHAT DO YOU ACTUALLY USE?
I MEAN... IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING?

NO-NO, IT'S FINE! AT MOST TIMES I PREFER USING *ANOTHER* KIND OF A STRAP-ON THING.

IT'S KINDA LIKE THIS THONG-THING THAT HAS...WELL...IT CAN HOLD A *WAND* IN JUST THE RIGHT PLACE.

AND THEN I CAN... WE BOTH CAN KINDA... Y'KNOW -- *GRIND!*

SO, YEAH... I PREFER THAT PERSONALLY.

I MEAN, IT CAN BE A BIT EXHAUSTING...

BUT DEFINITELY *MY* FAVORITE KIND OF POUNDING!

HUFF & PANT &

POUNDING?

I THOUGHT YOU SAID IT WAS *GRINDING?*

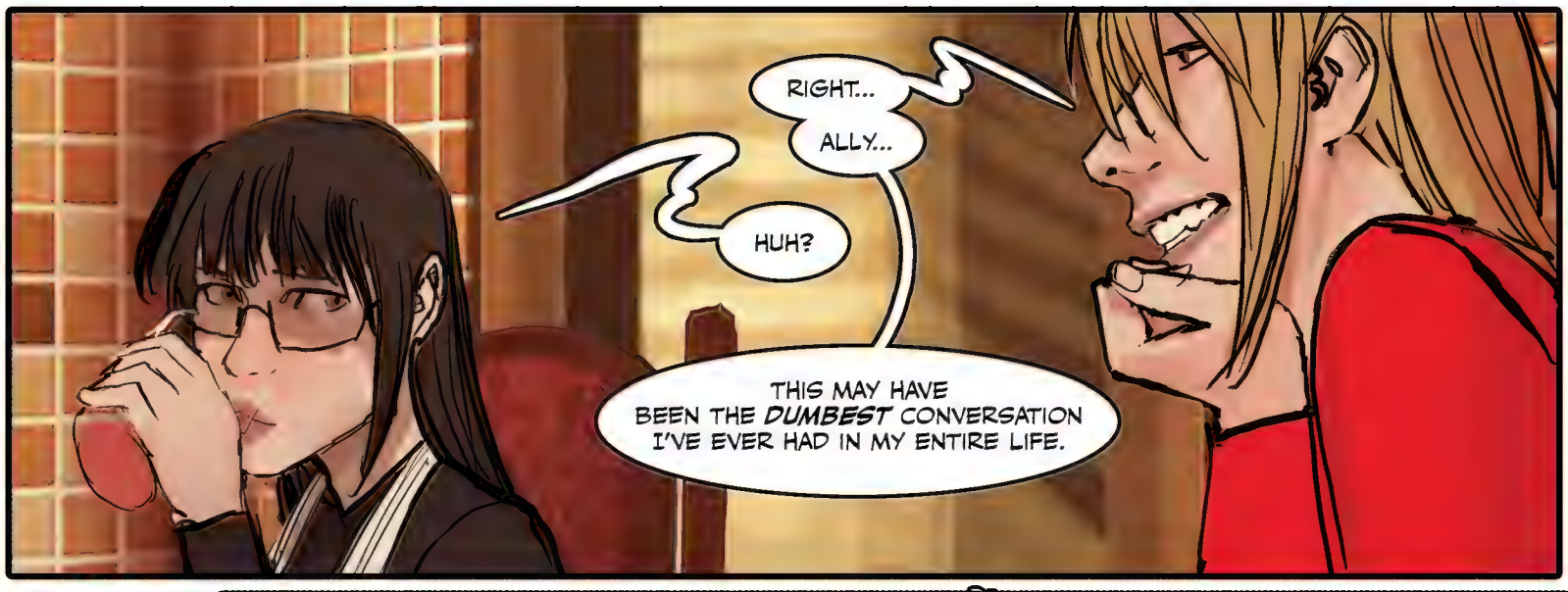
HEH...FORCE OF HABIT.

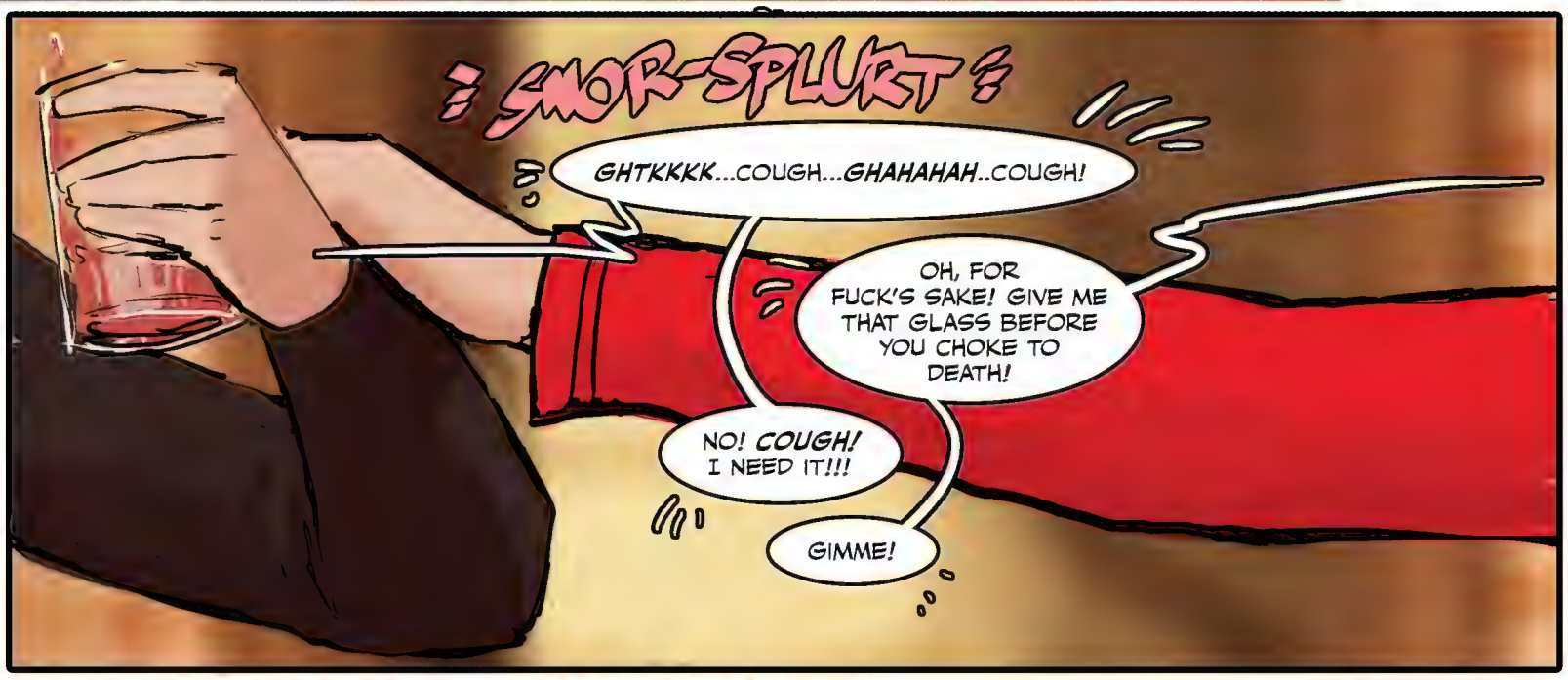
I STILL CALL IT POUNDING...

WHEN I SAY *GRINDING* I'M IMAGINING LOOT DROPS AND XP GAINS.

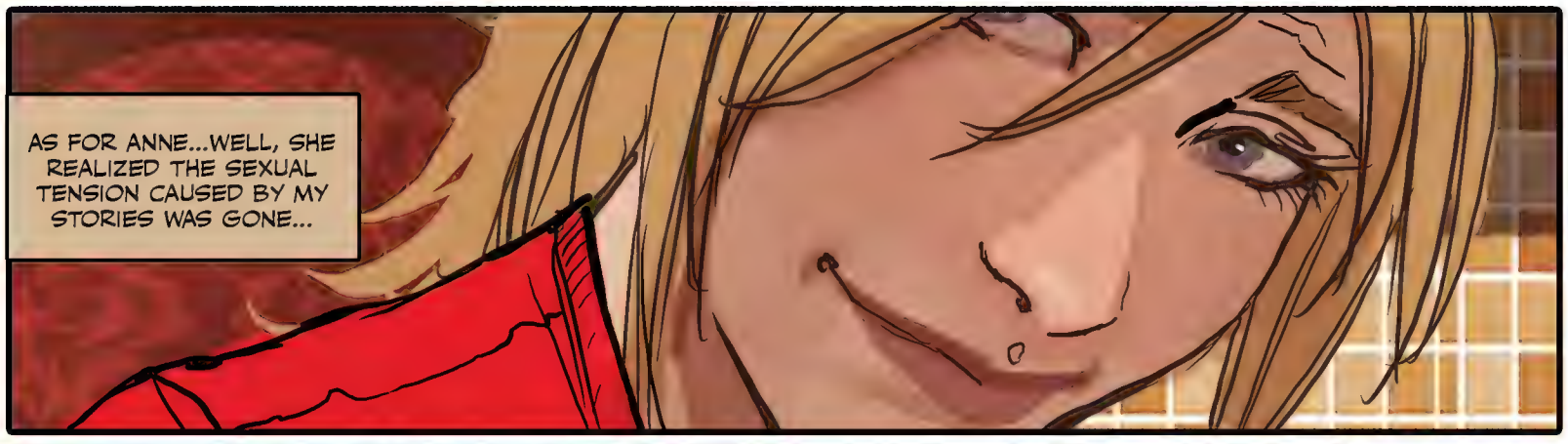
YEAH, SURE! LET'S *PRETEND* I UNDERSTOOD THAT!

VIDEO GAME LINGO...

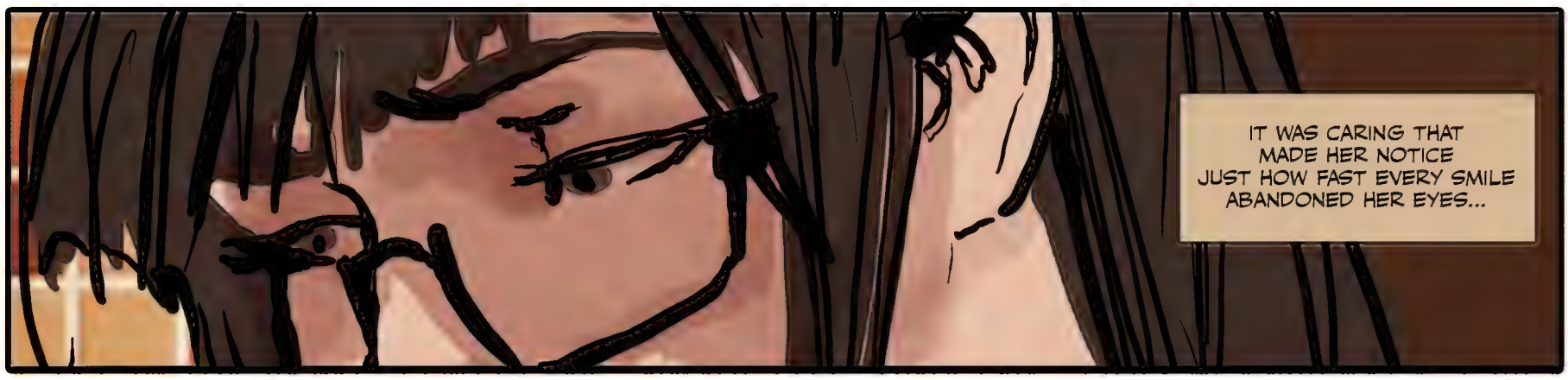

RIGHT...
ALLY...
HUH?
THIS MAY HAVE BEEN THE *DUMBEST* CONVERSATION I'VE EVER HAD IN MY ENTIRE LIFE.


SNOR-SPLURT
GHTKKKK...COUGH...GHAHAHAH..COUGH!
OH, FOR FUCK'S SAKE! GIVE ME THAT GLASS BEFORE YOU CHOKE TO DEATH!
NO! COUGH! I NEED IT!!!
GIMME!

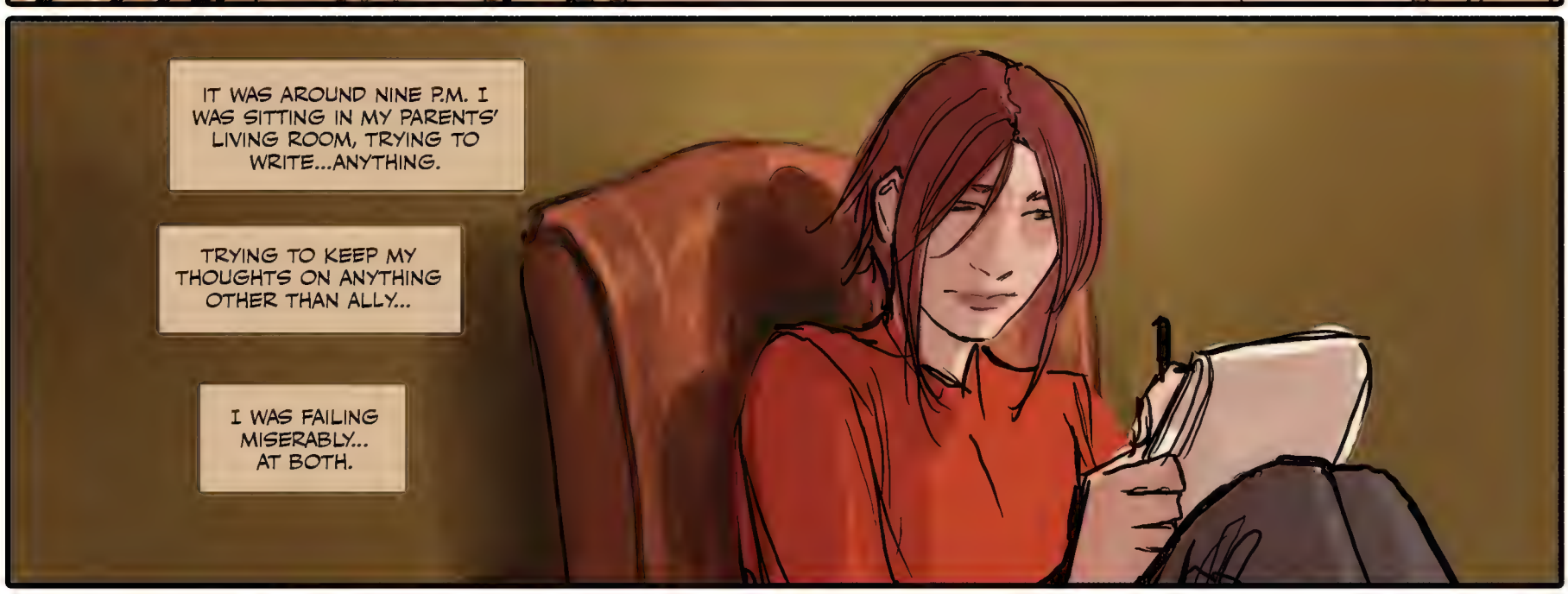
IT WAS A DUMB CONVERSATION. BUT IT WAS JUST THE DUMB CONVERSATION THAT ALLY NEEDED.


AS FOR ANNE...WELL, SHE REALIZED THE SEXUAL TENSION CAUSED BY MY STORIES WAS GONE...

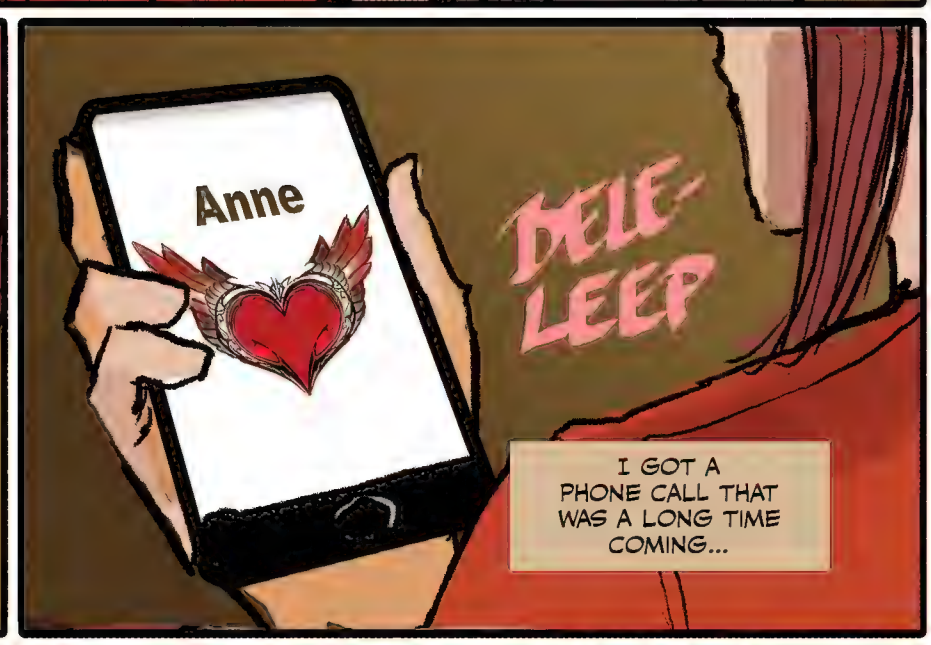
THANK YOU, ANNE...FOR EVERYTHING.
ALLY FROM THOSE STORIES... SHE WAS A PALE IMITATION.
ANNE STARTED CARING ABOUT THE REAL PERSON...

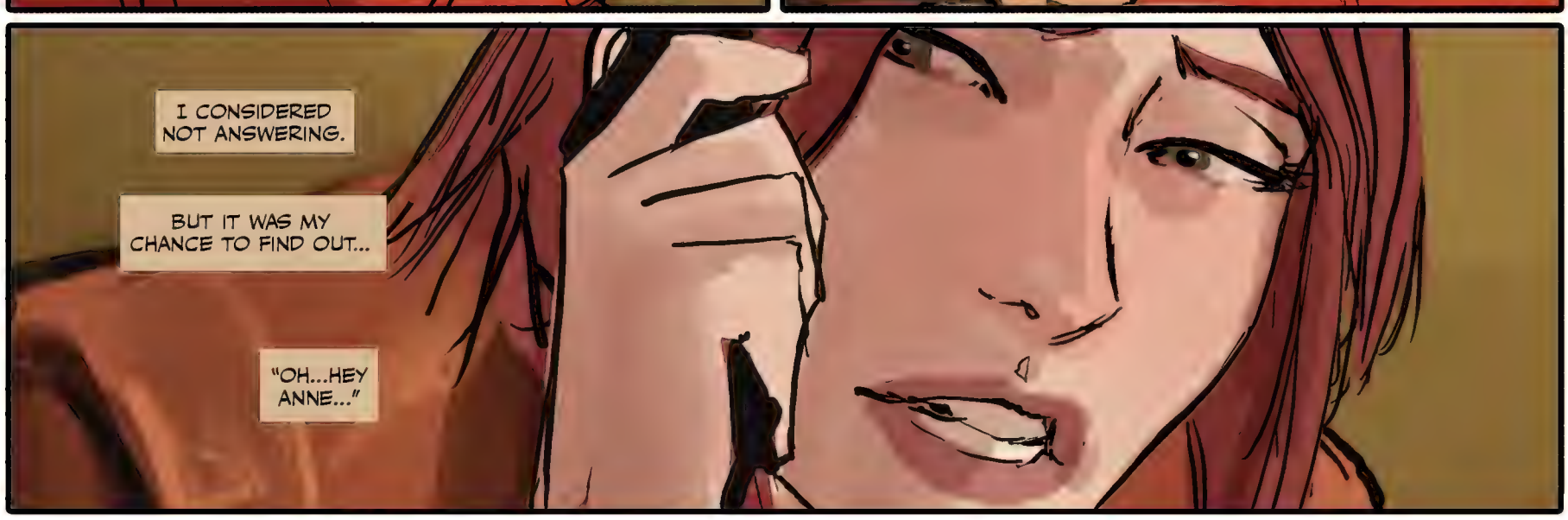

IT WAS CARING THAT MADE HER NOTICE JUST HOW FAST EVERY SMILE ABANDONED HER EYES...

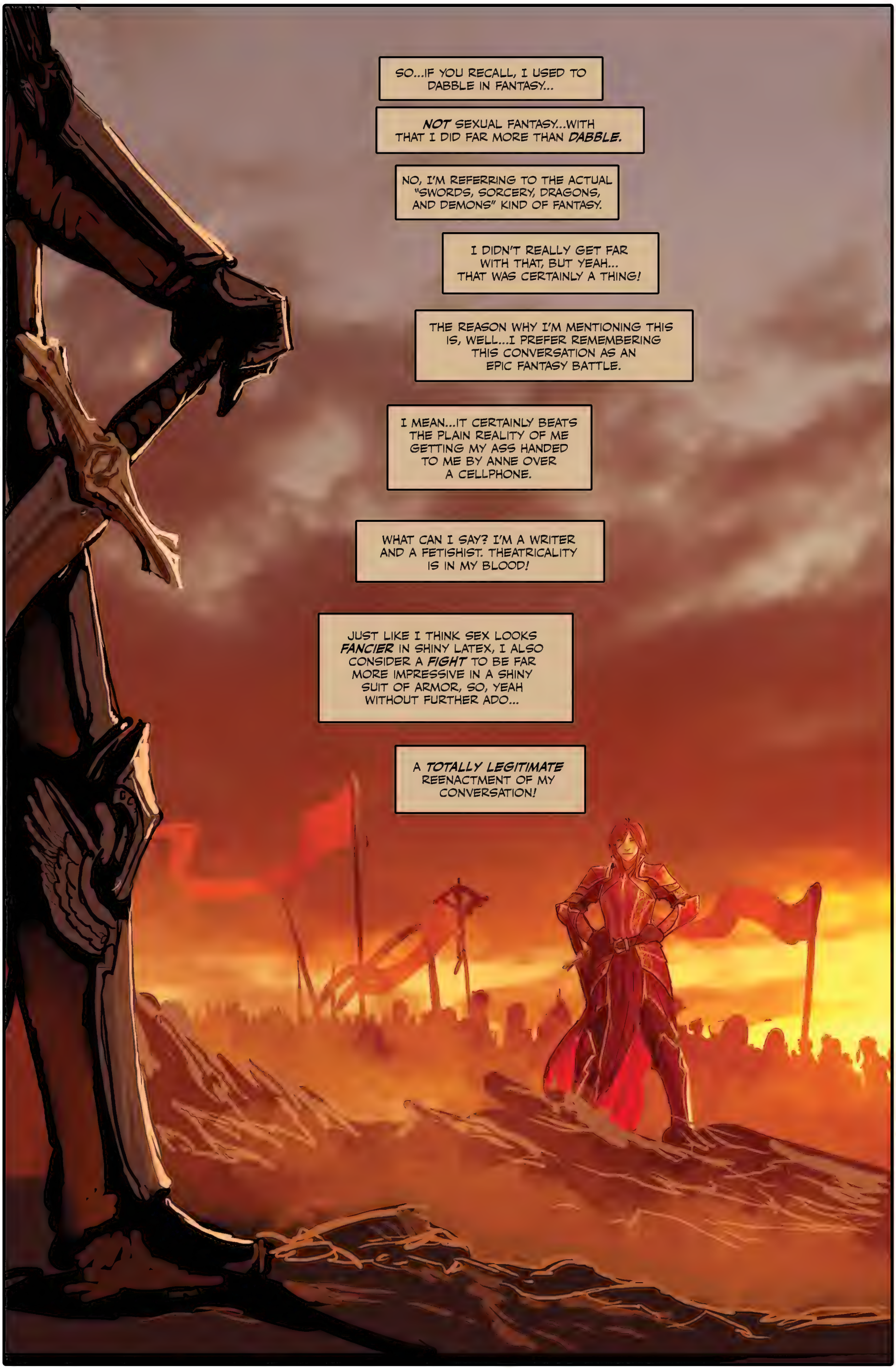
AND THAT ANGERED HER...
I...ANGERED HER...


IT WAS AROUND NINE P.M. I WAS SITTING IN MY PARENTS' LIVING ROOM, TRYING TO WRITE...ANYTHING.
TRYING TO KEEP MY THOUGHTS ON ANYTHING OTHER THAN ALLY...
I WAS FAILING MISERABLY... AT BOTH.

AND THEN...

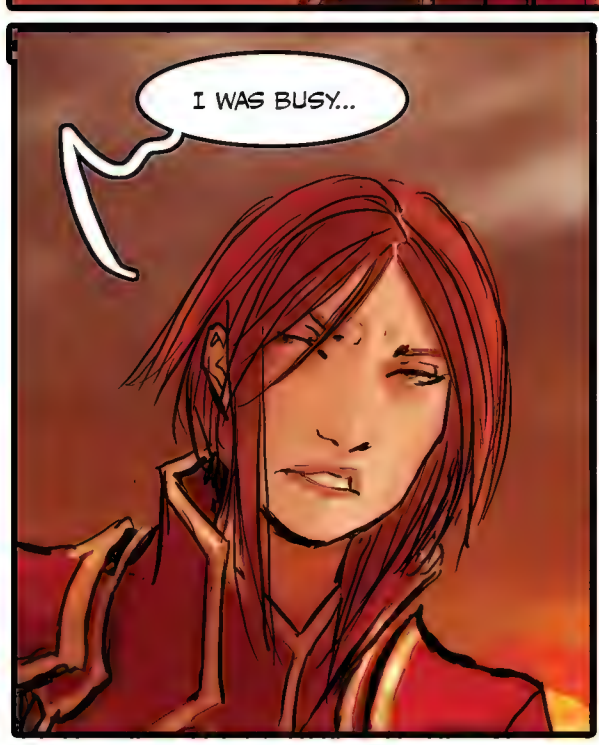

Anne
DELE-LEEP
I GOT A PHONE CALL THAT WAS A LONG TIME COMING...

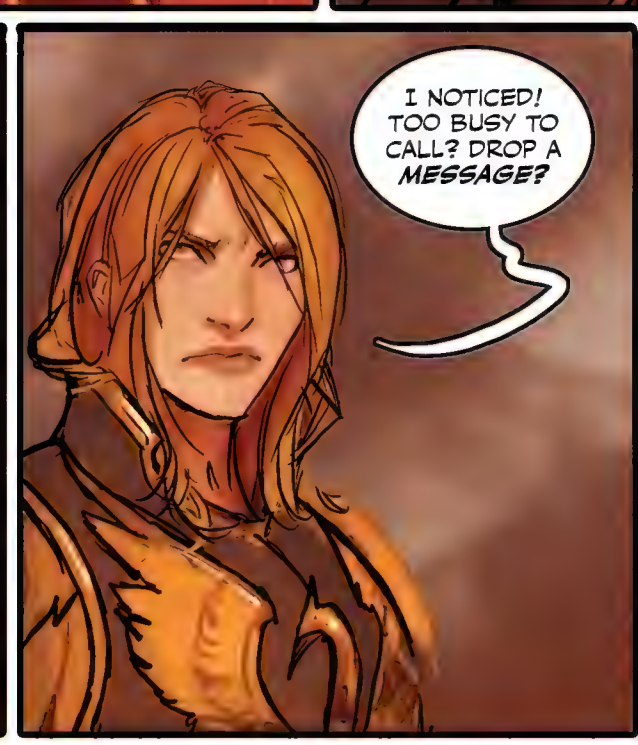

I CONSIDERED NOT ANSWERING.
BUT IT WAS MY CHANCE TO FIND OUT...
"OH...HEY ANNE..."

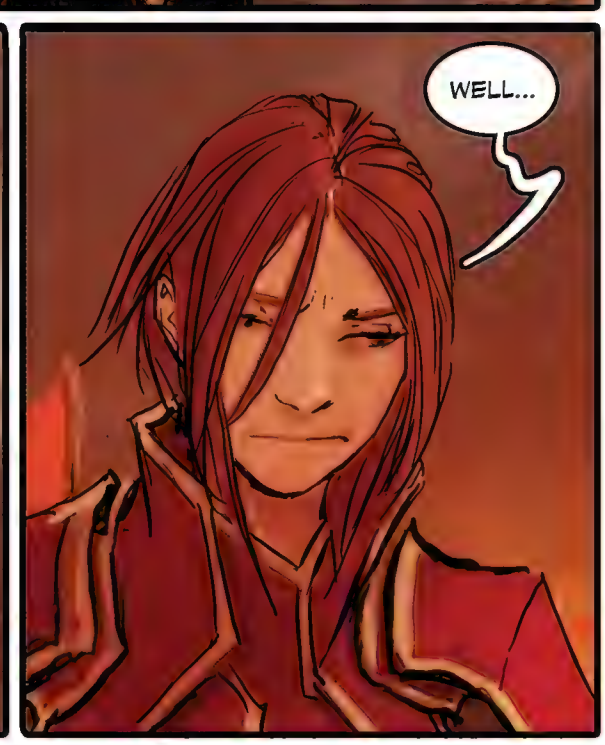

SO...IF YOU RECALL, I USED TO DABBLE IN FANTASY...
NOT SEXUAL FANTASY...WITH THAT I DID FAR MORE THAN *DABBLE.*
NO, I'M REFERRING TO THE ACTUAL "SWORDS, SORCERY, DRAGONS, AND DEMONS" KIND OF FANTASY.
I DIDN'T REALLY GET FAR WITH THAT, BUT YEAH... THAT WAS CERTAINLY A THING!
THE REASON WHY I'M MENTIONING THIS IS, WELL...I PREFER REMEMBERING THIS CONVERSATION AS AN EPIC FANTASY BATTLE.
I MEAN...IT CERTAINLY BEATS THE PLAIN REALITY OF ME GETTING MY ASS HANDED TO ME BY ANNE OVER A CELLPHONE.
WHAT CAN I SAY? I'M A WRITER AND A FETISHIST. THEATRICALITY IS IN MY BLOOD!
JUST LIKE I THINK SEX LOOKS *FANCIER* IN SHINY LATEX, I ALSO CONSIDER A *FIGHT* TO BE FAR MORE IMPRESSIVE IN A SHINY SUIT OF ARMOR, SO, YEAH WITHOUT FURTHER ADO...
A *TOTALLY LEGITIMATE* REENACTMENT OF MY CONVERSATION!

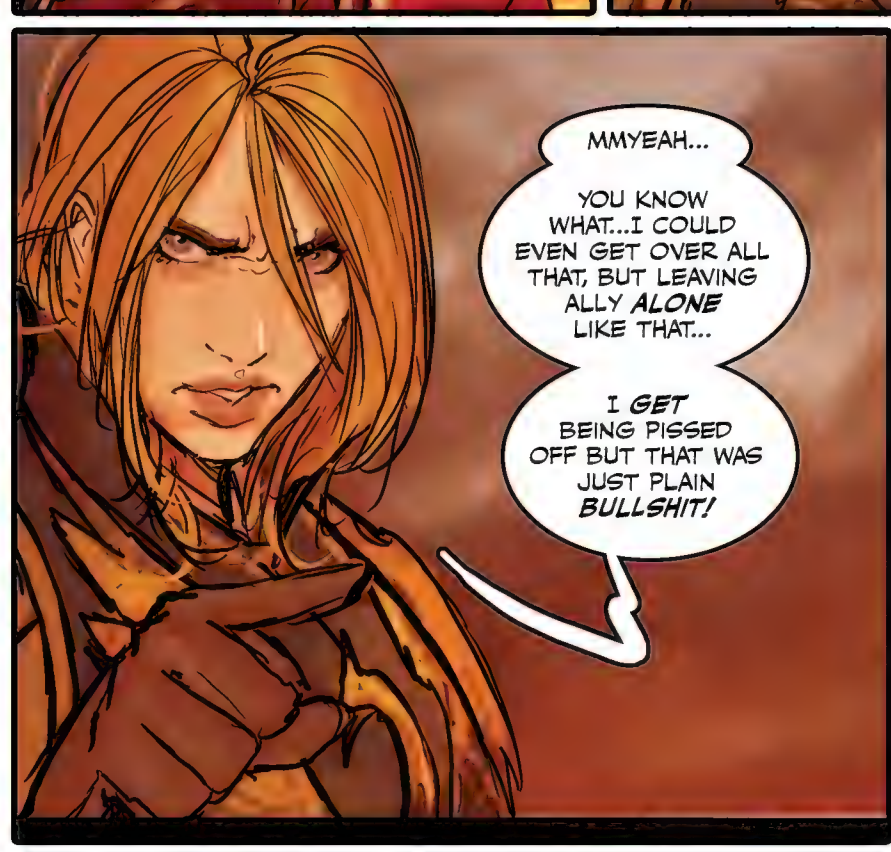
HEY, ANNE!

OH... SO YOU *ARE* ALIVE?
I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER!


I WAS BUSY...


I NOTICED! TOO BUSY TO CALL? DROP A *MESSAGE?*

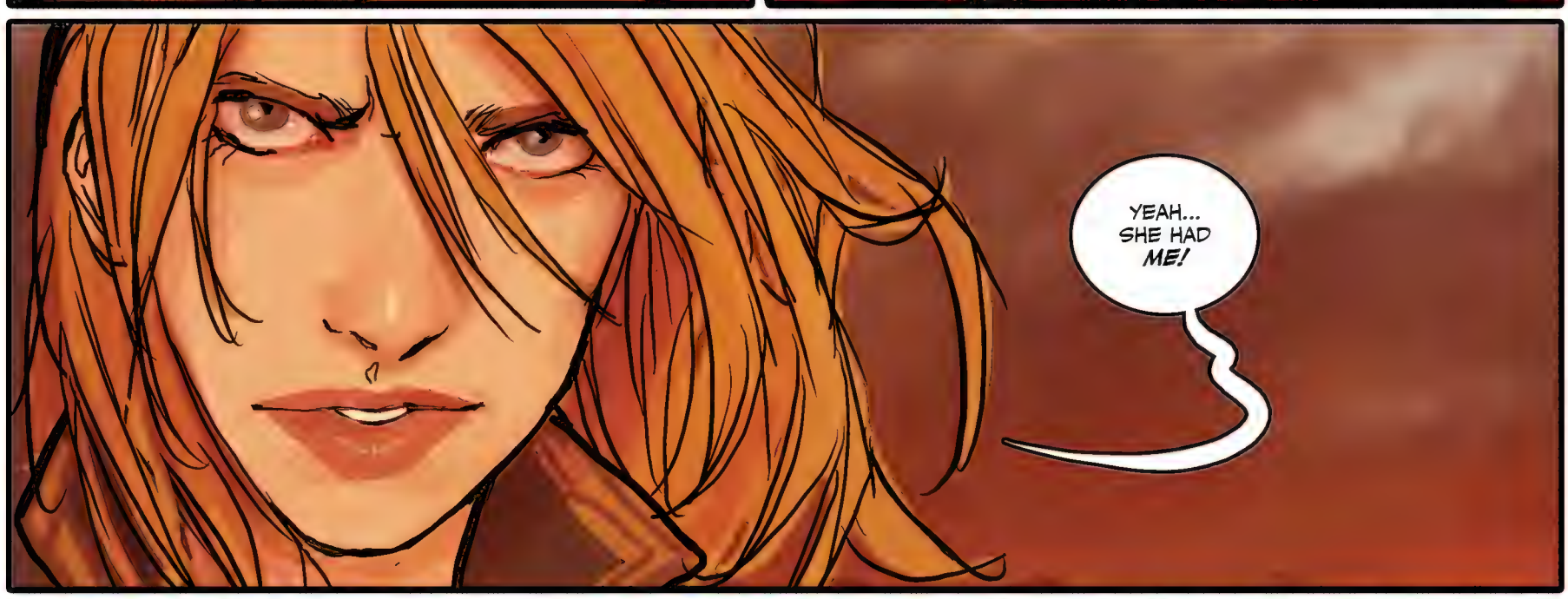

WELL...


MMYEAH...
YOU KNOW WHAT...I COULD EVEN GET OVER ALL THAT, BUT LEAVING ALLY *ALONE* LIKE THAT...
I *GET* BEING PISSED OFF BUT THAT WAS JUST PLAIN *BULLSHIT!*

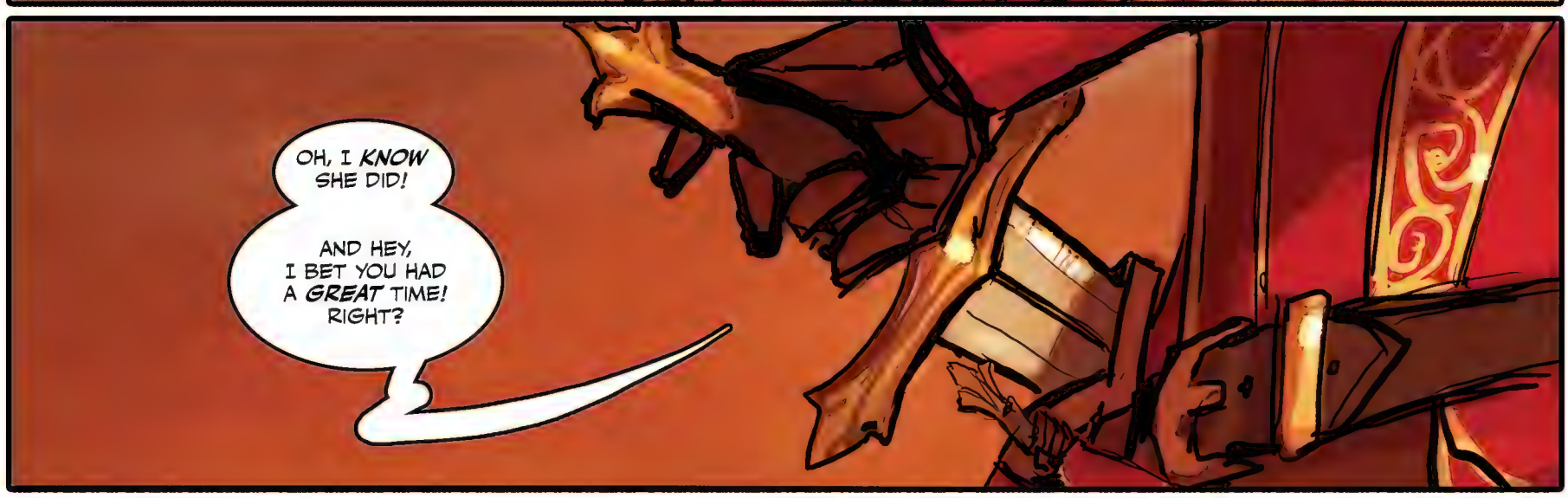
OH, COME ON NOW, ANNE!

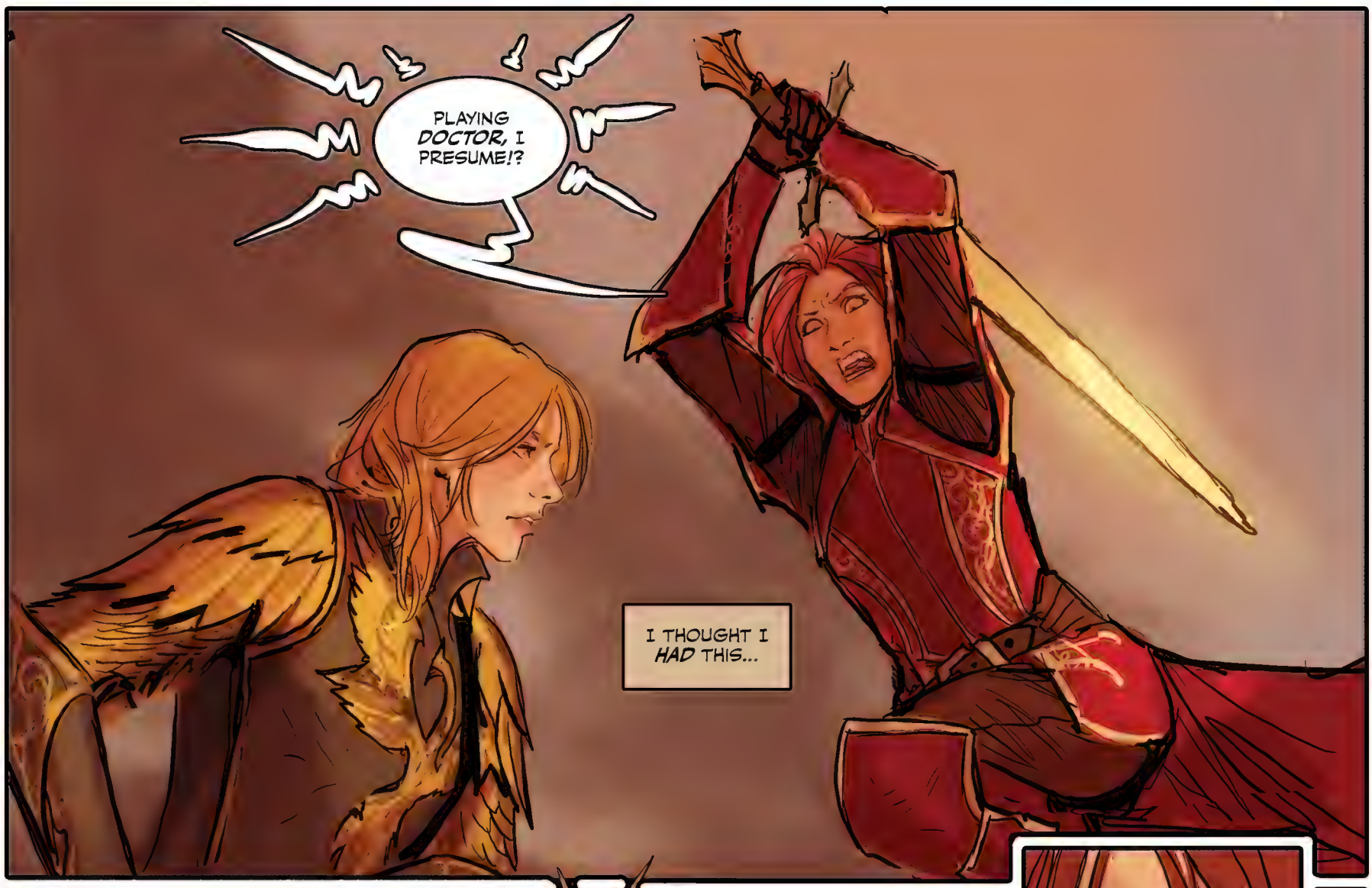
COME ON, *WHAT?*

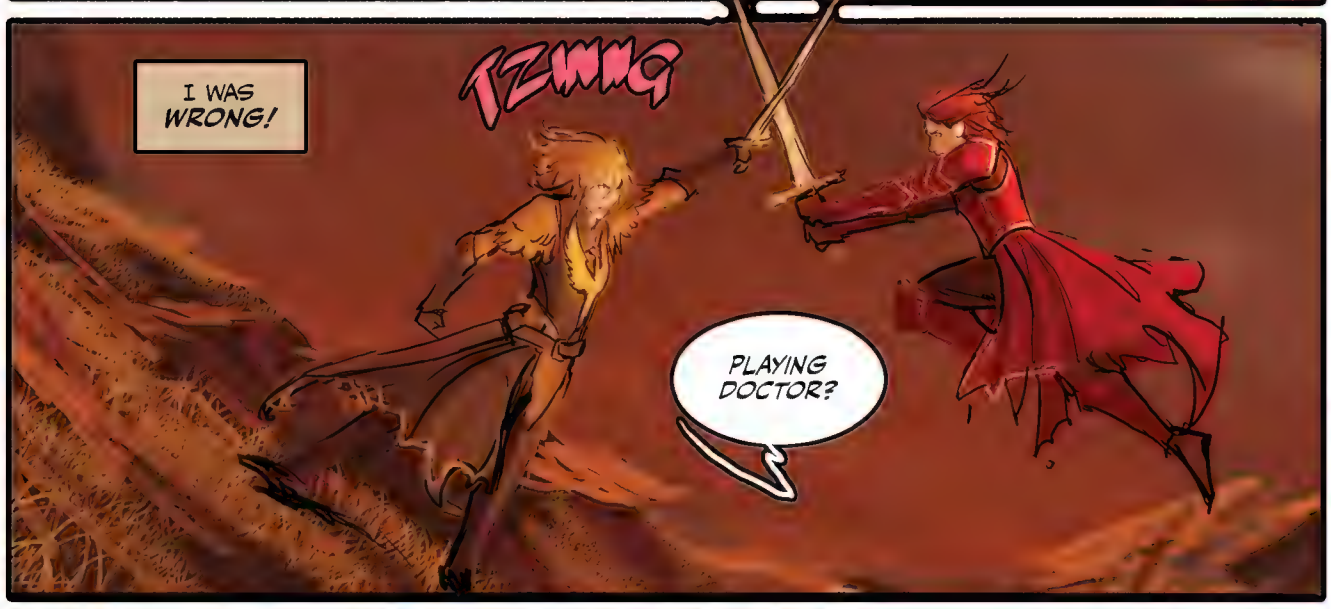
YOU AND I BOTH KNOW SHE WASN'T *ALONE* ON HALLOWEEN.

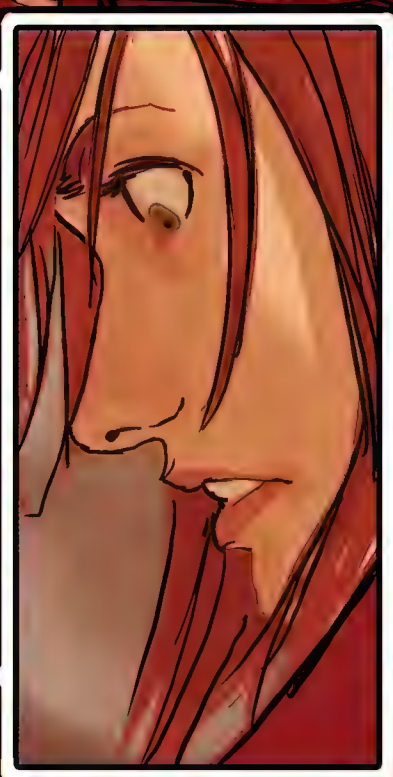

YEAH... SHE HAD *ME!*

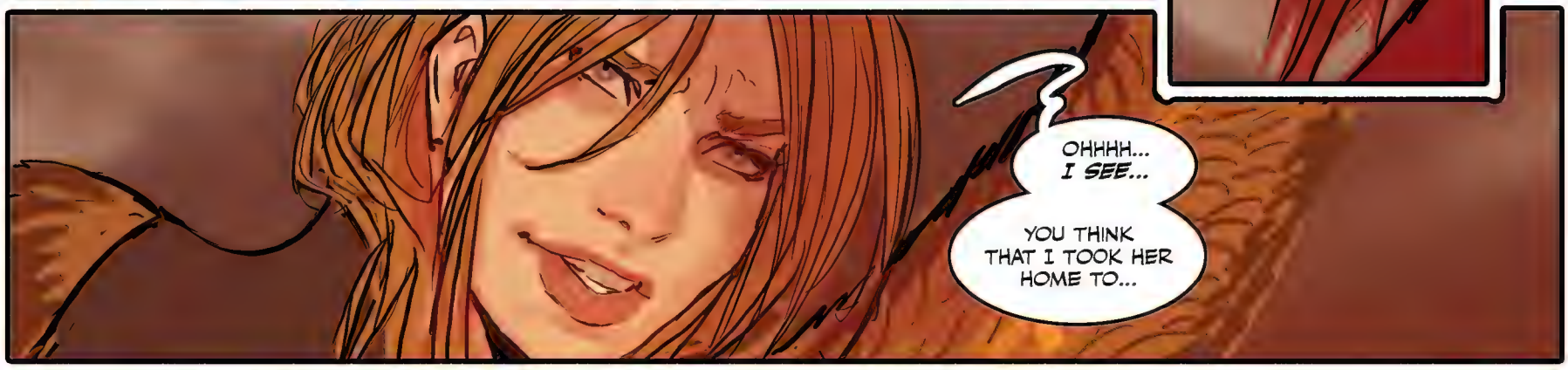
IT WAS HER COLD TONE...SO NONCHALANT, SO MATTER-OF-FACT. IT PISSED ME THE FUCK OFF...


OH, I *KNOW* SHE DID!
AND HEY, I BET YOU HAD A *GREAT* TIME! RIGHT?


PLAYING DOCTOR, I PRESUME!?
I THOUGHT I HAD THIS...

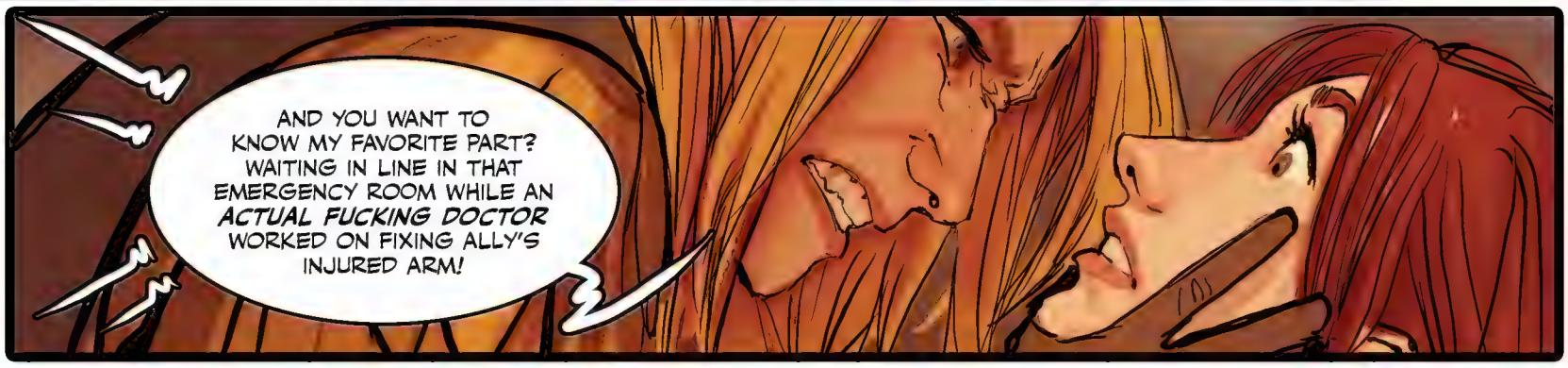

I WAS WRONG!
TZING
PLAYING DOCTOR?



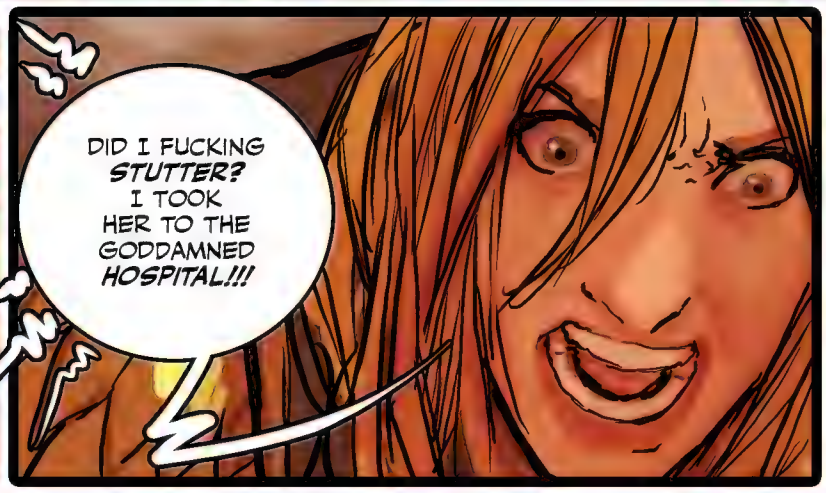

OHHHH... I SEE...
YOU THINK THAT I TOOK HER HOME TO...

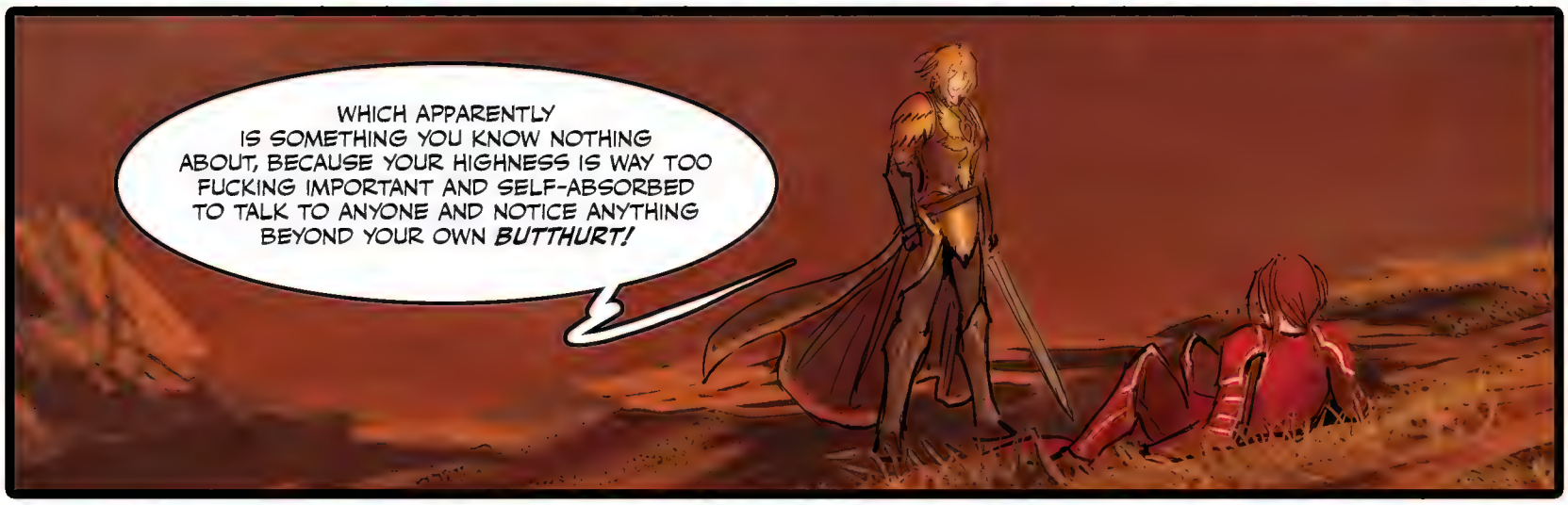
RIGHT! YEAH, SURE, THAT WAS EXACTLY WHAT WE DID!
WE PLAYED DOCTOR! AND HOOLY CRAP, IT LASTED FOR A WHILE! ALMOST TWO HOURS!
FWINNG
OOMPF!

YUP...TWO HOURS OF SPECIAL-TIME PAIN...BANDAGES! IMMOBILIZING BODY PARTS! IT WAS SIMPLY UNFORGETTABLE!

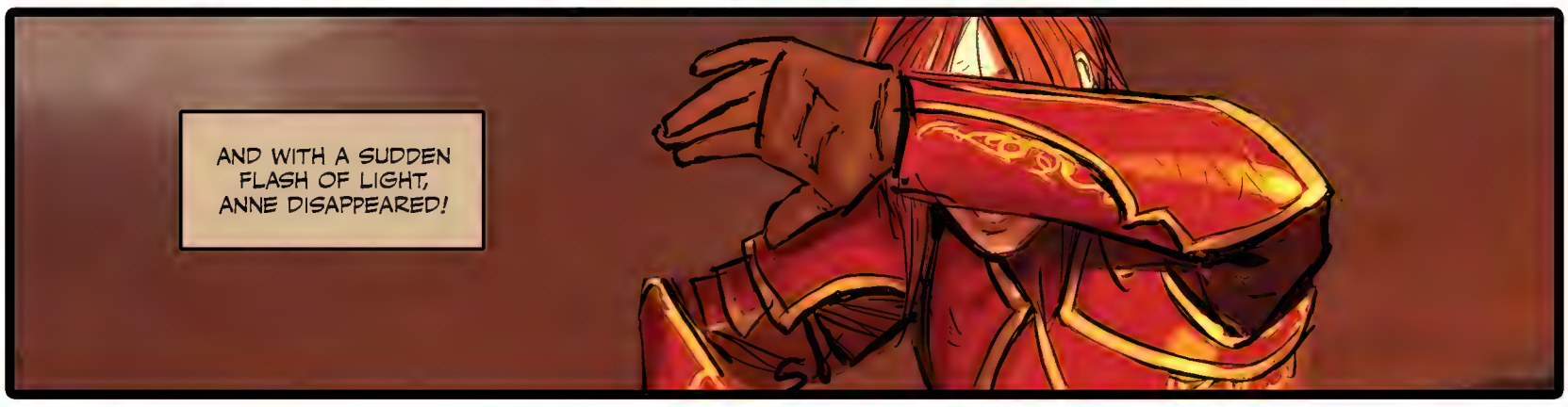

AND YOU WANT TO KNOW MY FAVORITE PART? WAITING IN LINE IN THAT EMERGENCY ROOM WHILE AN *ACTUAL FUCKING DOCTOR* WORKED ON FIXING ALLY'S INJURED ARM!

INJURED... WAIT, *WHAT?*


DID I FUCKING *STUTTER?* I TOOK HER TO THE GODDAMNED *HOSPITAL!!!*

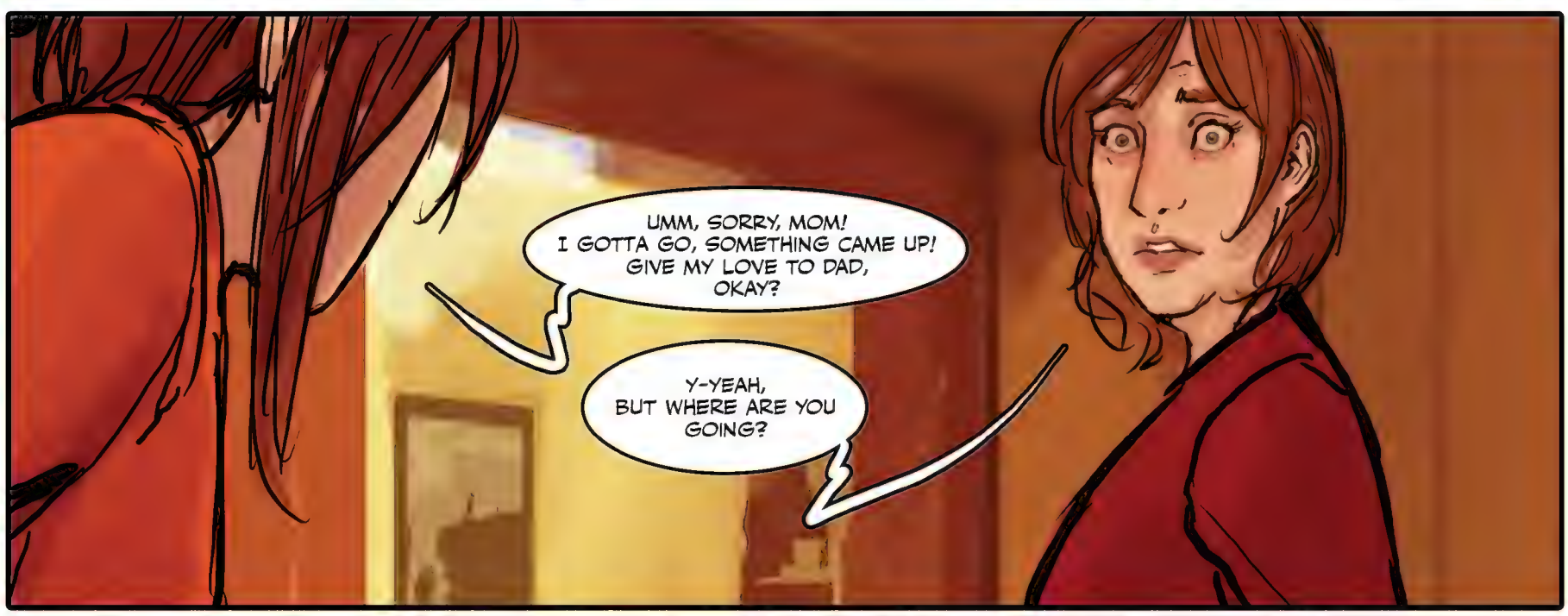

WHICH APPARENTLY IS SOMETHING YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT, BECAUSE YOUR HIGHNESS IS WAY TOO FUCKING IMPORTANT AND SELF-ABSORBED TO TALK TO ANYONE AND NOTICE ANYTHING BEYOND YOUR OWN *BUTTHURT!*

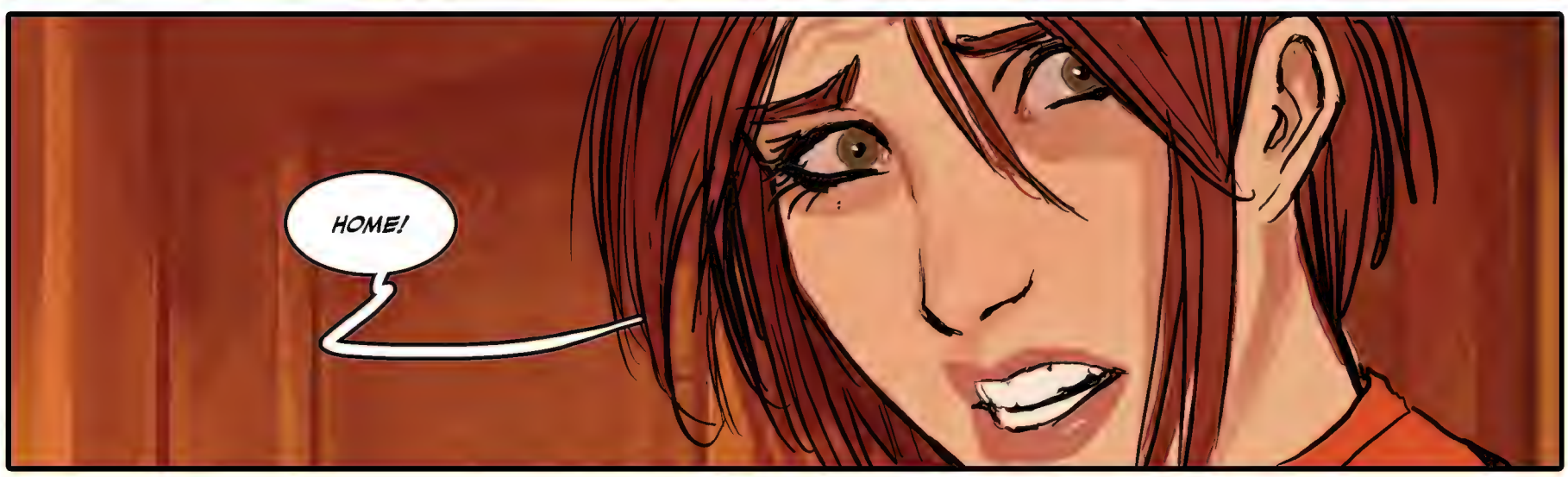
ANNE, *PLEASE!* WAIT! *WHAT HAPPENED?*
WHY DON'T YOU ASK HER YOURSELF?


AND WITH A SUDDEN FLASH OF LIGHT, ANNE DISAPPEARED!

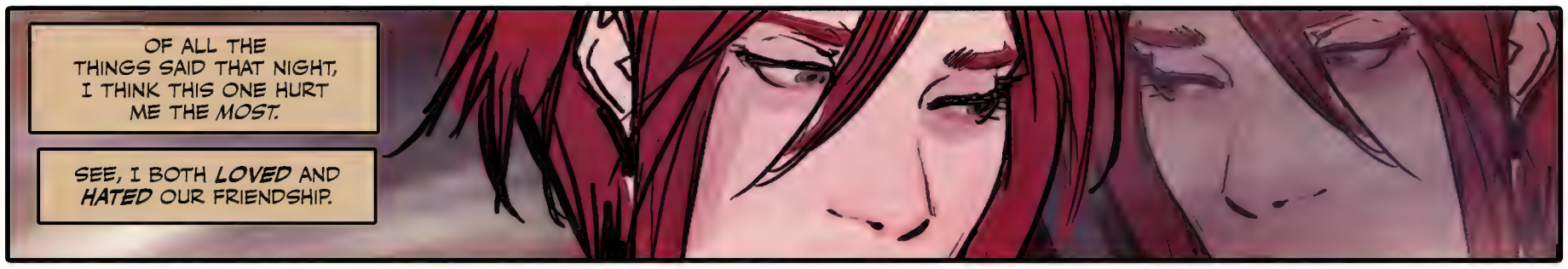
AND BY THAT I MEAN SHE *HUNG UP* ON MY DUMB ASS!

LISA?


UMM, SORRY, MOM! I GOTTA GO, SOMETHING CAME UP! GIVE MY LOVE TO DAD, OKAY?
Y-YEAH, BUT WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

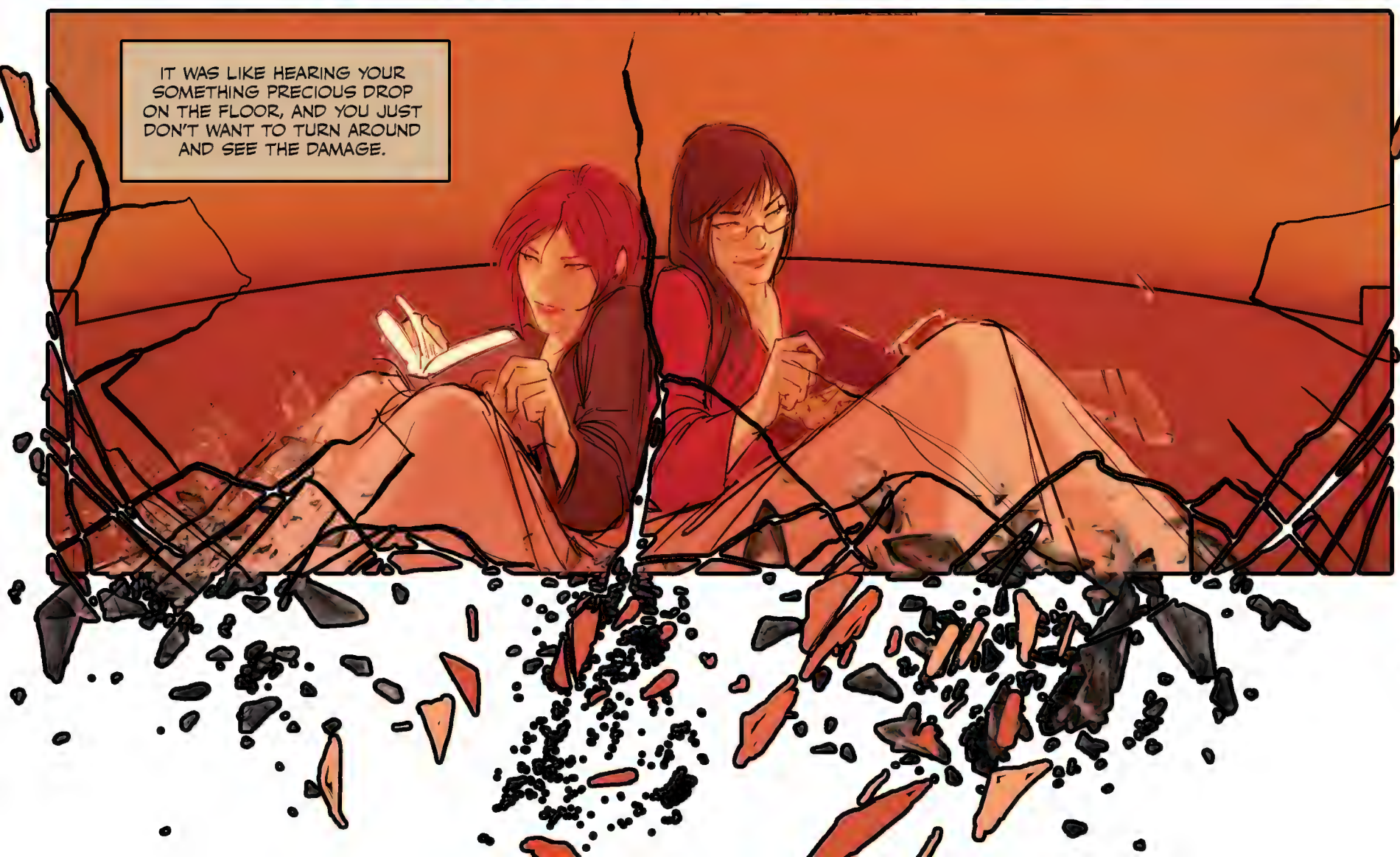

HOME!

YEAH, WELL... FUCK YOU AND YOUR FRIENDSHIP!


OF ALL THE THINGS SAID THAT NIGHT, I THINK THIS ONE HURT ME THE MOST.
SEE, I BOTH LOVED AND HATED OUR FRIENDSHIP.

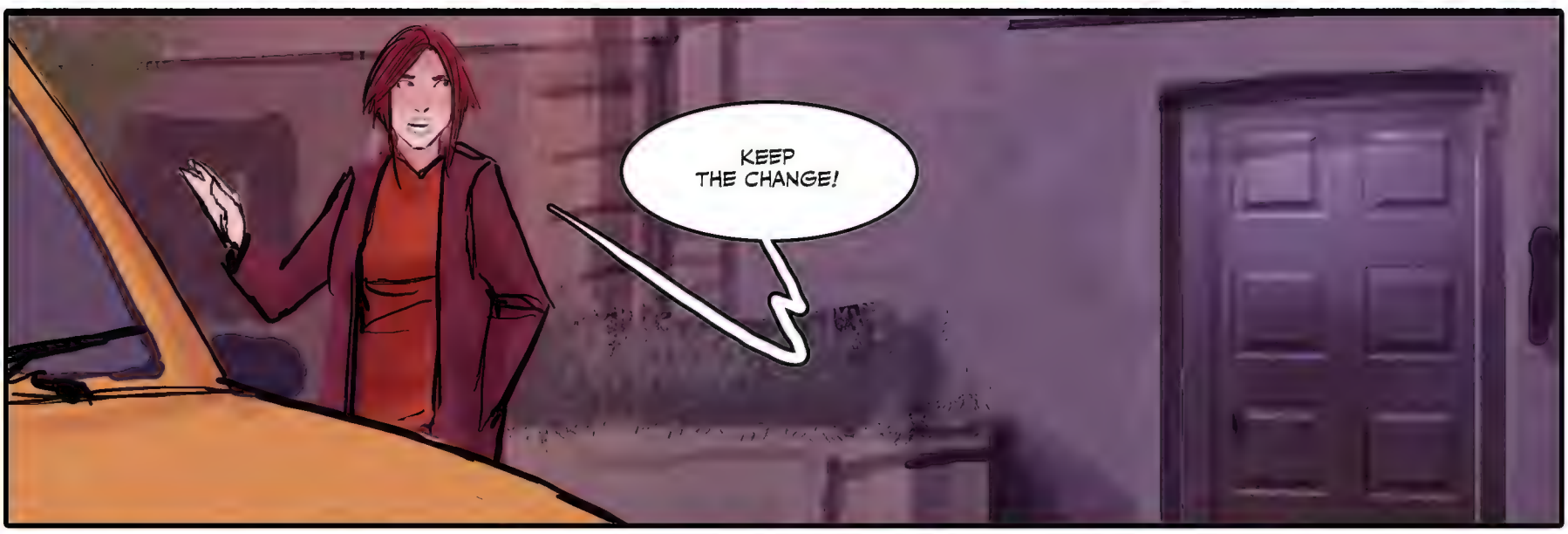
IT WAS THE SECOND BEST, THE GOOD ENOUGH.
BUT LIKE IN THAT SONG... IT WAS THE ONE THING WE GOT!
BDSM WAS THE THING THAT CONNECTED US, BUT OUR FRIENDSHIP WAS WHAT KEPT US TOGETHER...

YES, I WANTED MORE... BUT NEVER LESS.
I GUESS THAT IS WHY I HADN'T CALLED HER BACK.


IT WAS LIKE HEARING YOUR SOMETHING PRECIOUS DROP ON THE FLOOR, AND YOU JUST DON'T WANT TO TURN AROUND AND SEE THE DAMAGE.

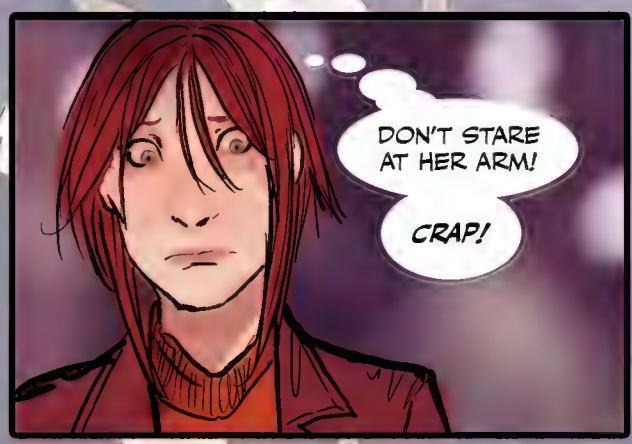
I COULD NO LONGER AVOID IT.
I HAVEN'T SEEN ALLY IN SIX DAYS...
SIX MISERABLE DAYS.
DAYS FILLED WITH OVERTHINKING.
MISS?

MISS!
HUH?
THIS IT?
OH! RIGHT! YES, THANK YOU!


KEEP THE CHANGE!

THE HELL IS WITH THIS KEY?

YOU KNOW, I PASSED THROUGH THAT DOOR MANY TIMES.
WONDERFUL TIMES.
PIZZA
WELCOMING TIMES!
GOOD TIMES...
BUT HEY...EVEN A COIN WILL ONLY LAND ON TAILS SO MANY TIMES IN A ROW.
O--OH.
UM... HEY!


DON'T STARE AT HER ARM!
CRAP!

I...
I TRIED UNLOCKING THE DOOR BUT...
MY KEY WAS INSIDE.

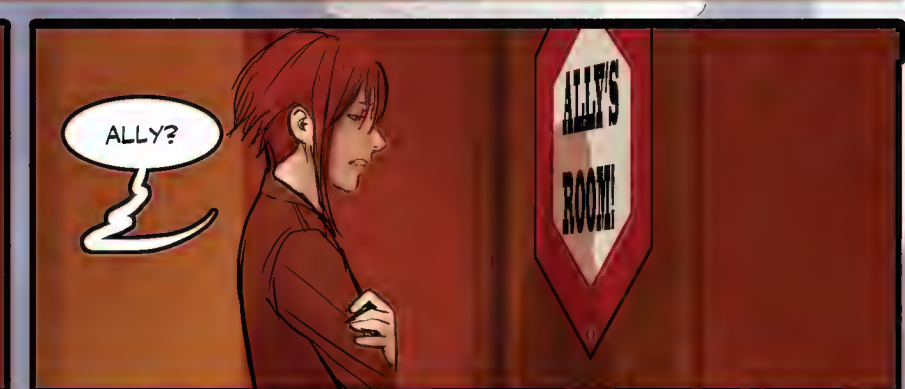
RIGHT... RIGHT...

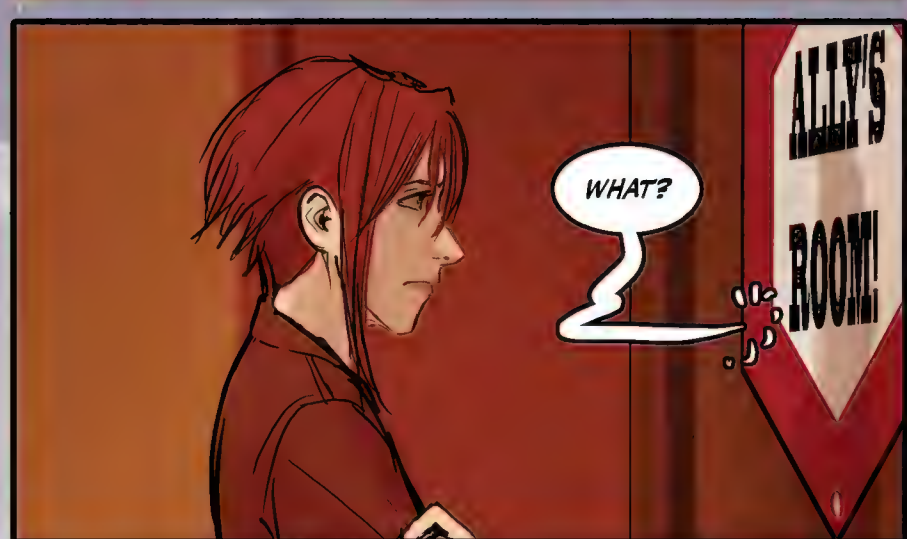
YEAH... WELL, COME IN OR WHATEVER.

UHH...HOW IS YOUR ARM?

'SOKAY!
SLAM!
RIGHT...
ALLY'S ROOM!

ALLY'S ROOM!


ALLY?
ALLY'S ROOM!


WHAT?
ALLY'S ROOM!

UHH...
ALLY'S ROOM!

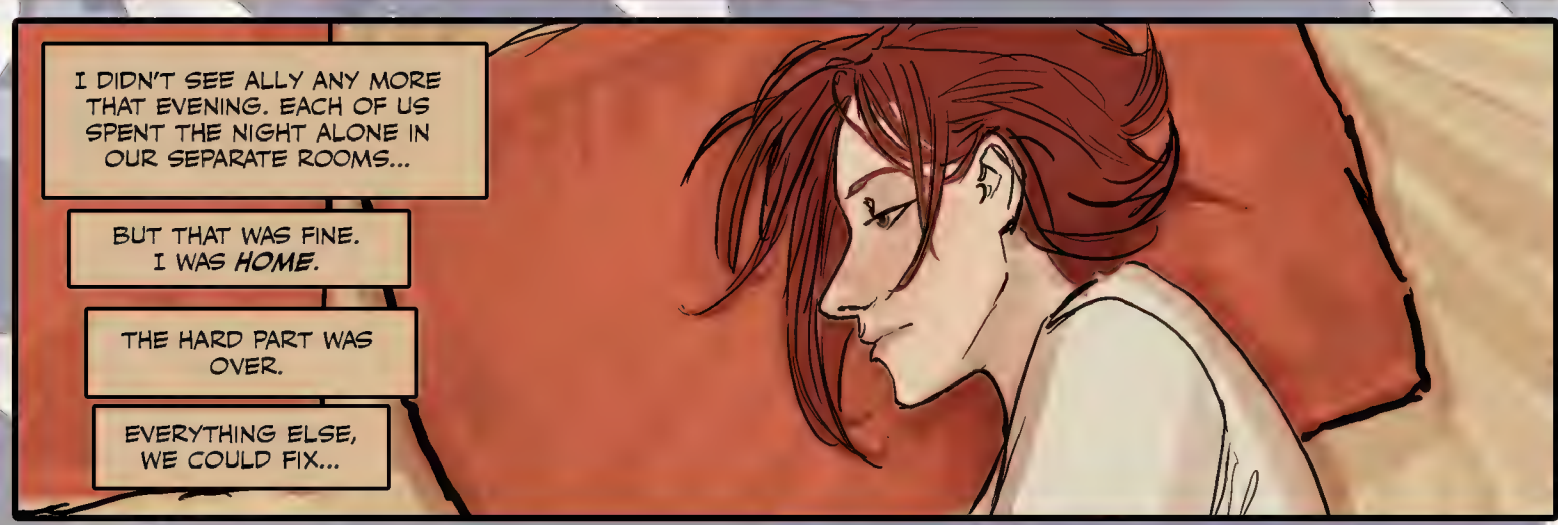
...
LINE?

THANKS, BRAIN! ALWAYS THERE FOR ME!

I GUESS... I'LL BE IN MY ROOM IF YOU NEED ME.

ALLY'S ROOM!

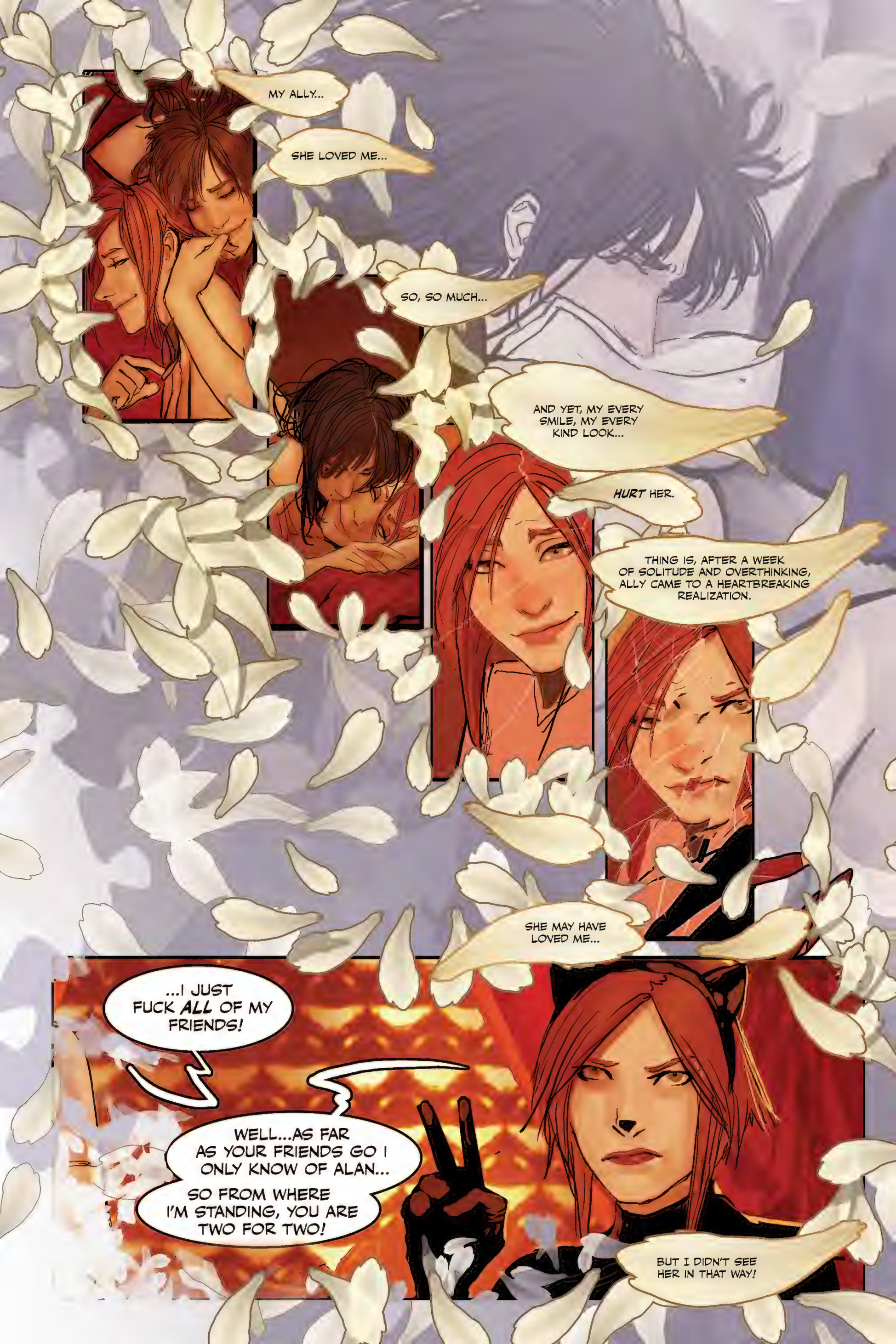
YEAH...


I DIDN'T SEE ALLY ANY MORE THAT EVENING. EACH OF US SPENT THE NIGHT ALONE IN OUR SEPARATE ROOMS...
BUT THAT WAS FINE. I WAS *HOME*.
THE HARD PART WAS OVER.
EVERYTHING ELSE, WE COULD FIX...

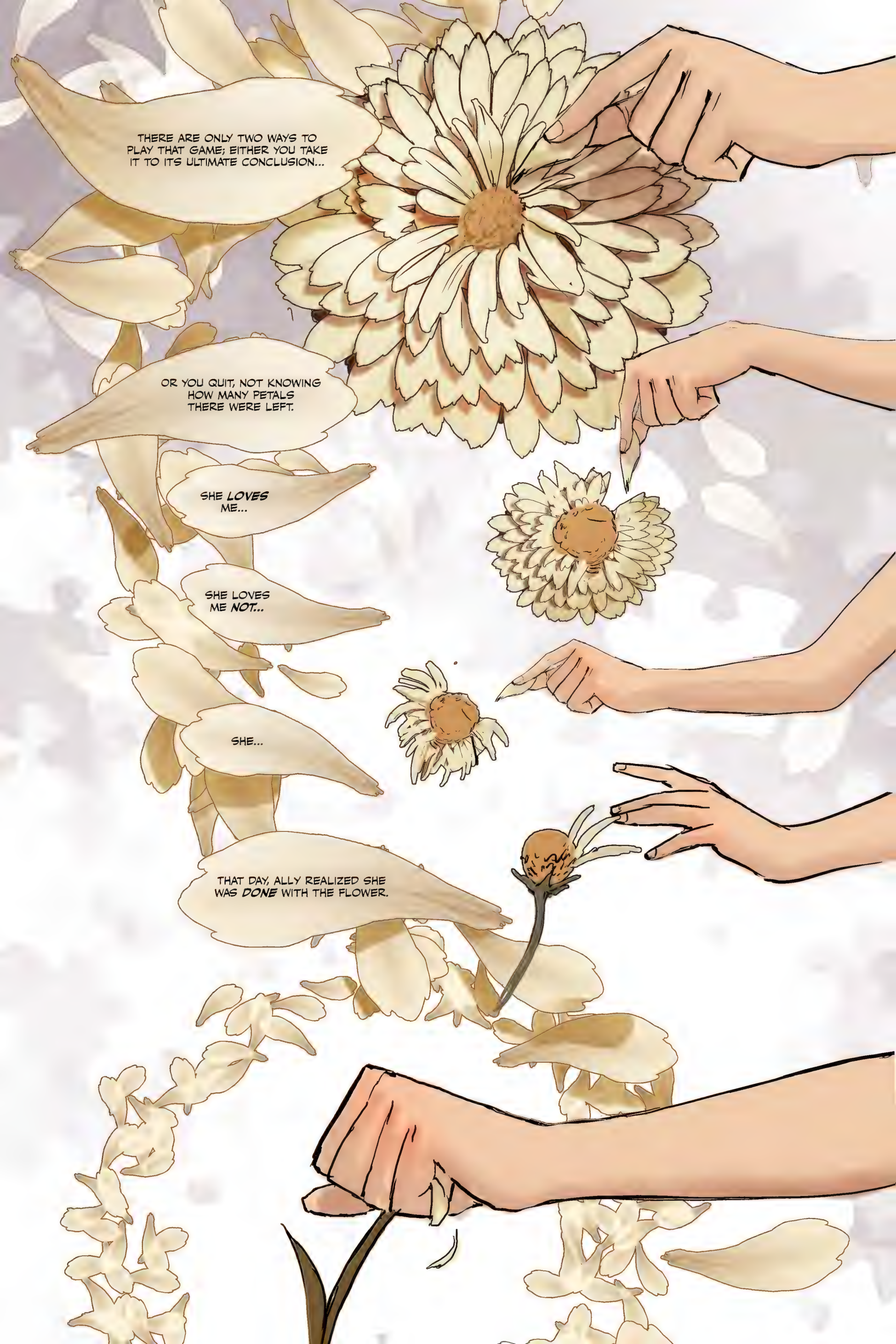
SO, NATURALLY, WE BARELY SPOKE TO EACH OTHER THE NEXT DAY...
UM...YOU WANT...
I'LL BE IN MY ROOM, WORKING.

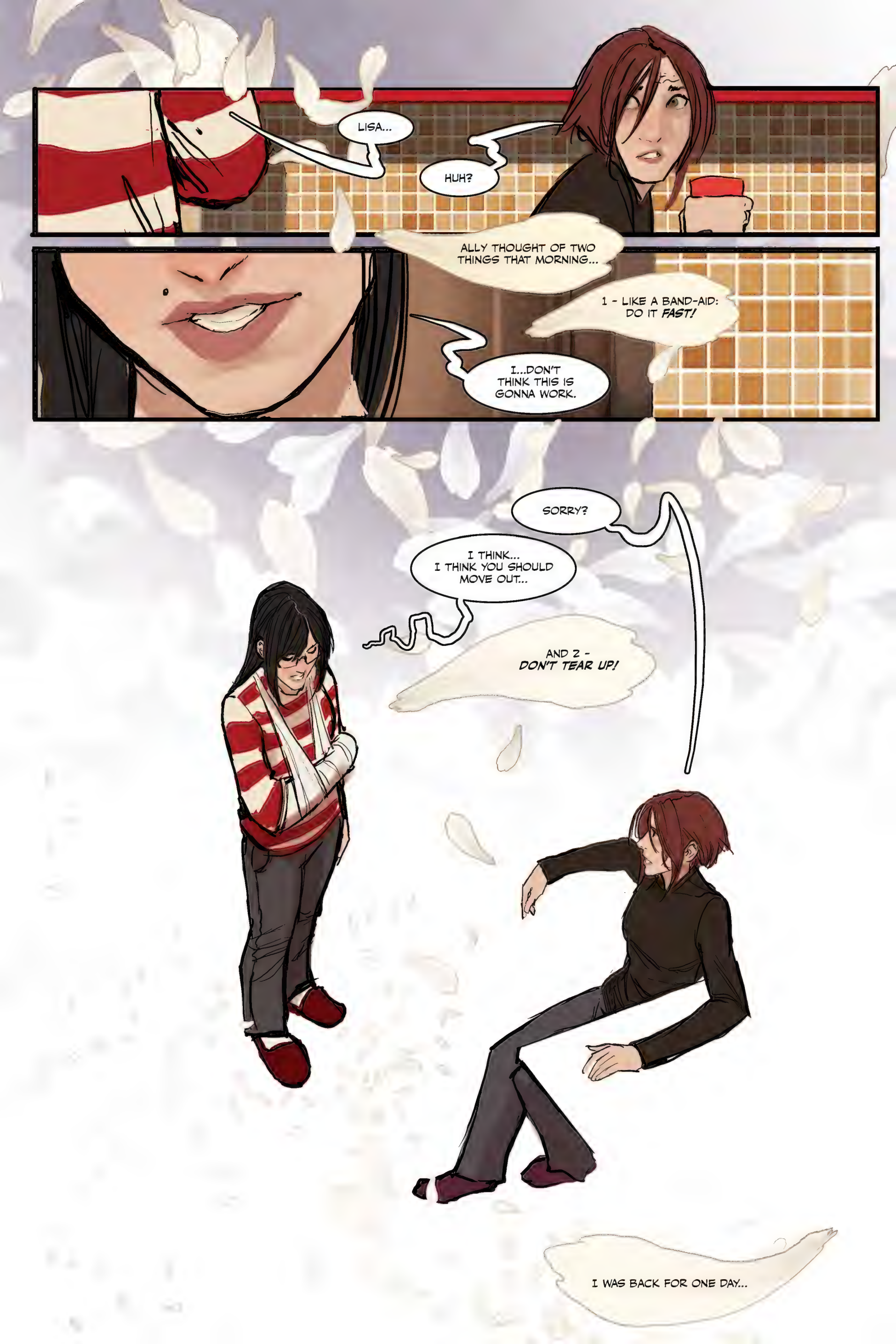
ALLY, I'M OFF TO WORK. YOU WANT ME TO BRING US SOMETHING FOR DINNER?
NOT FOR MY LACK OF TRYING.
I'M FINE. I'LL ORDER SOME TAKEOUT.

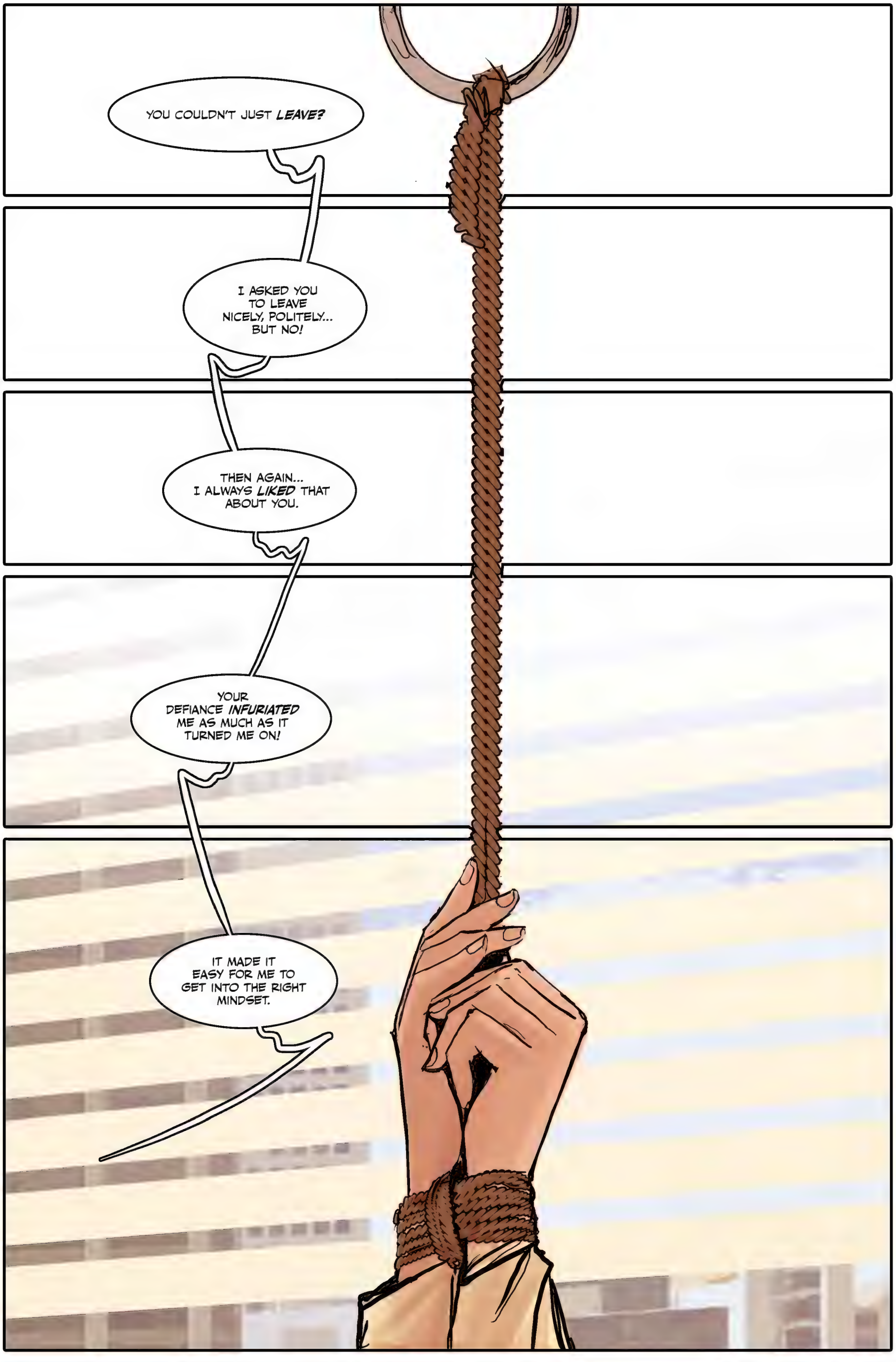
BY EVENING, MY AWKWARDNESS TURNED INTO FULL SULKINESS.
I HESITATED IN CONFRONTING HER...I GUESS I FELT SORRY FOR HER, WHAT WITH THE ARM AND ALL.
BUT...AT NIGHT, WHEN SHE WAS AWAY, HER WORDS ONCE AGAIN RETURNED TO GNAW AT THE BACK OF MY MIND.
I *HAD TO* RESOLVE THIS!
I DECIDED I WAS GOING TO CONFRONT HER THE NEXT MORNING!
TURNS OUT... ALLY HAD MADE THE EXACT SAME DECISION.

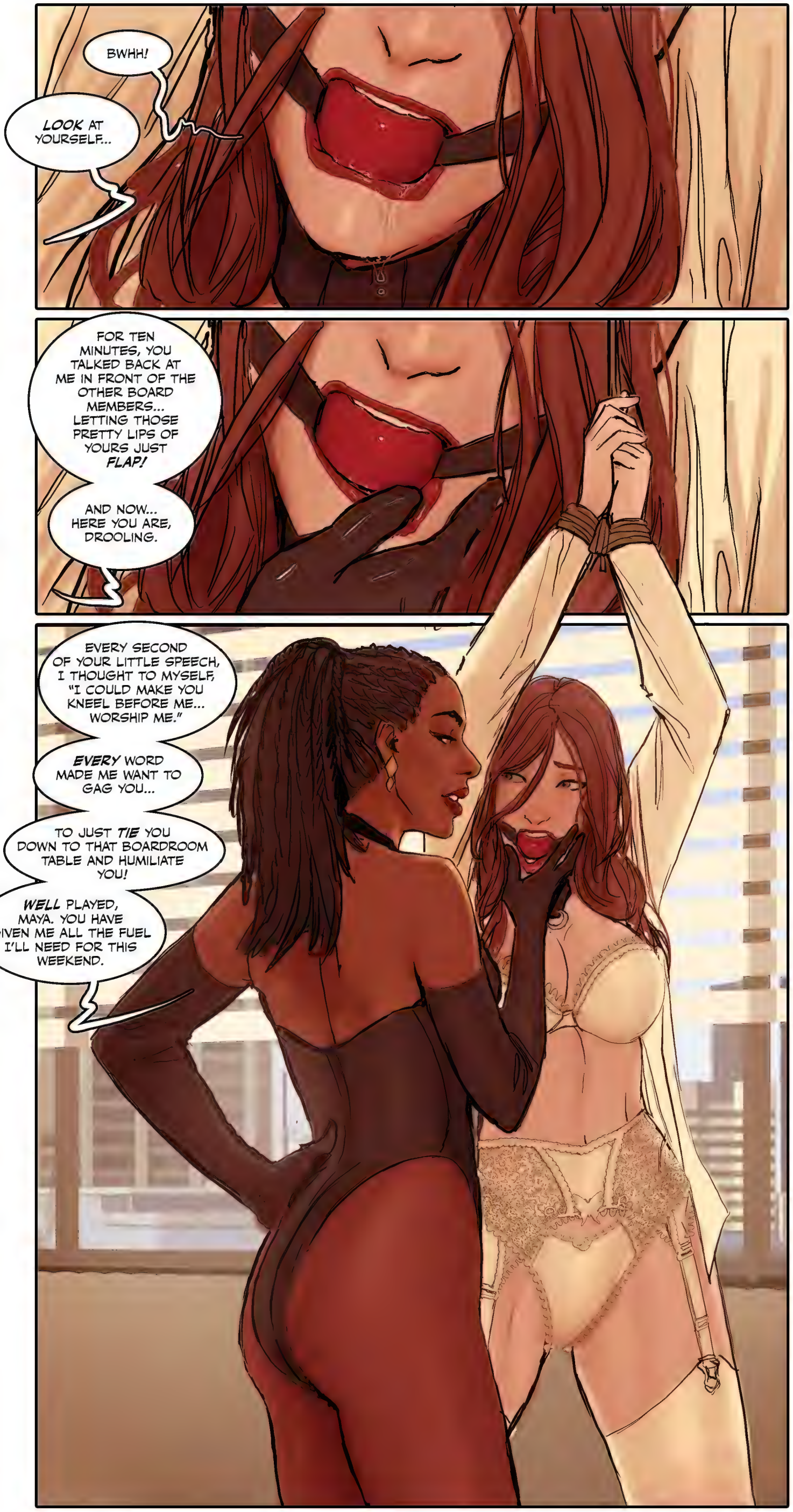

MY ALLY...
SHE LOVED ME...
SO, SO MUCH...
AND YET, MY EVERY SMILE, MY EVERY KIND LOOK...
HURT HER.
THING IS, AFTER A WEEK OF SOLITUDE AND OVERTHINKING, ALLY CAME TO A HEARTBREAKING REALIZATION.
SHE MAY HAVE LOVED ME...
...I JUST FUCK ALL OF MY FRIENDS!
WELL...AS FAR AS YOUR FRIENDS GO I ONLY KNOW OF ALAN...
SO FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, YOU ARE TWO FOR TWO!
BUT I DIDN'T SEE HER IN THAT WAY!

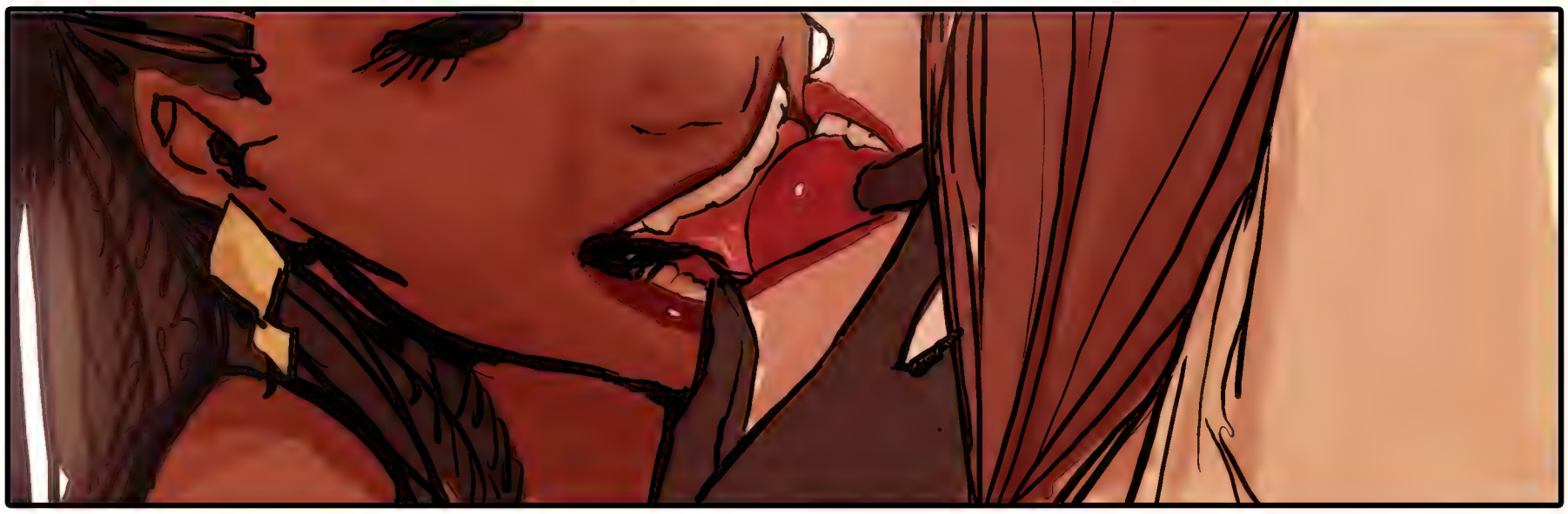
AND SO, THERE WE WERE, DEAR READER!
STUCK IN THIS REPETITIVE CYCLE.
SAME IDEAS...
SAME EXCUSES...
WE WERE JUST FRIENDS...
YET, I LOVED HER.
WHY RISK THE "GOOD ENOUGH?"
BUT I LOVED HER.
MANY TIMES OVER, I REITERATED WHAT BDSM WAS ALL ABOUT, USING IT LIKE A STRANGE MANTRA.
GLORIFYING THE TRUST WE SHARED SEXUALLY...
WHILE IRONICALLY LACKING THE SAME WHEN IT CAME TO MATTERS OF THE HEART.
INSTEAD OF EMOTIONAL HONESTY, WE KEPT REPEATING OUR PATTERN OF HINTS AND MISSES.
OVER, AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
I OFTEN CONSIDERED REMOVING SOME SEEMINGLY IRRELEVANT EVENTS...STREAMLINING IT ALL...JUST, YOU KNOW, BEING A WRITER.
TREATING OUR LIVES AS A *STORY*...
BUT, TURNS OUT I COULDN'T DO THAT.
WHY?
BECAUSE REPETITION WAS ONE OF THE DEFINING TRAITS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP BACK THEN.
SEE, THING IS, THE *FRIENDZONE* IS ALL ABOUT REPETITION, AND WE WERE UP TO OUR EYEBALLS IN IT.
OH, NO, THIS WAS NOT THE INTERNET'S CYNICAL IDEA OF THE FRIENDZONE, OFTEN ATTRIBUTED TO SEXUALLY FRUSTRATED, MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE TRYING TO SWEET-TALK THEIR WAY INTO SOMEONE'S BEDROOM.
HELL, WE HAD ZERO PROBLEMS WITH THAT BIT.
NO, THE REAL FRIENDZONE IS NOT ABOUT SEX... IT'S ABOUT UNREQUITED LOVE. UNSPOKEN FEELINGS. SILENCE OUT OF FEAR!
BECAUSE YOU ARE AFRAID TO RISK THE FRIENDSHIP...
RISK THE THE ILLUSION OF TRUST...
RISK THE "GOOD ENOUGH."
SO, INSTEAD, YOU ARE STUCK IN THIS FRUSTRATING CYCLE, AND IN IT YOU SEE THEIR SMILES, THEIR EVERY MOVEMENT, THEIR EVERY ACTION, AND YOU ASK YOURSELF OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
WHAT DO THEY MEAN BY IT? IS THERE MORE TO THE SMILE, THE LOOK, TO THEIR CASUAL TOUCH?
IT IS THE CONTINUOUS LOOP OF HOPE GAINED, AND HOPE CRUSHED.
A SEEMINGLY MADDENING EFFORT OF SOLVING THE RIDDLES OF THEIR SIGNALS, WHILE WONDERING IF THERE EVEN ARE SIGNALS TO DECIPHER.
TO PUT IT IN THE SIMPLEST WAY, FRIENDZONE IS PLAYING THE "SHE LOVES ME, SHE LOVES ME NOT" GAME ON A FLOWER THAT HAS A SEEMINGLY INFINITE NUMBER OF PETALS.


THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS TO PLAY THAT GAME; EITHER YOU TAKE IT TO ITS ULTIMATE CONCLUSION...
OR YOU QUIT, NOT KNOWING HOW MANY PETALS THERE WERE LEFT.
SHE *LOVES* ME...
SHE LOVES ME *NOT*...
SHE...
THAT DAY, ALLY REALIZED SHE WAS *DONE* WITH THE FLOWER.


LISA...
HUH?
ALLY THOUGHT OF TWO THINGS THAT MORNING...
1 - LIKE A BAND-AID: DO IT *FAST!*
I...DON'T THINK THIS IS GONNA WORK.
SORRY?
I THINK... I THINK YOU SHOULD MOVE OUT...
AND 2 - *DON'T TEAR UP!*
I WAS BACK FOR ONE DAY...

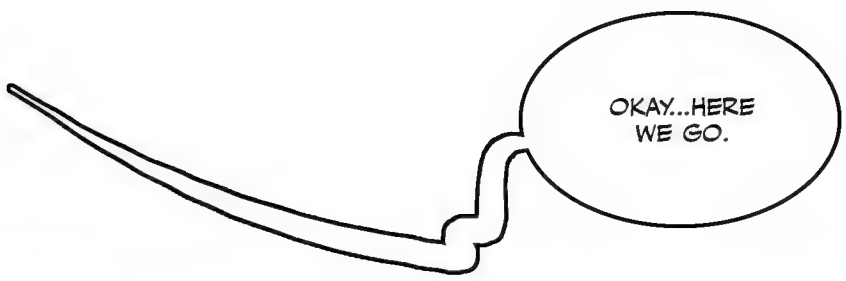

YOU COULDN'T JUST *LEAVE?*
I ASKED YOU TO LEAVE NICELY, POLITELY... BUT NO!
THEN AGAIN... I ALWAYS *LIKED* THAT ABOUT YOU.
YOUR DEFIANCE *INFURIATED* ME AS MUCH AS IT TURNED ME ON!
IT MADE IT EASY FOR ME TO GET INTO THE RIGHT MINDSET.


BWHH!
LOOK AT YOURSELF...
FOR TEN MINUTES, YOU TALKED BACK AT ME IN FRONT OF THE OTHER BOARD MEMBERS... LETTING THOSE PRETTY LIPS OF YOURS JUST FLAP!
AND NOW... HERE YOU ARE, DROOLING.
EVERY SECOND OF YOUR LITTLE SPEECH, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "I COULD MAKE YOU KNEEL BEFORE ME... WORSHIP ME."
EVERY WORD MADE ME WANT TO GAG YOU...
TO JUST TIE YOU DOWN TO THAT BOARDROOM TABLE AND HUMILIATE YOU!
WELL PLAYED, MAYA. YOU HAVE GIVEN ME ALL THE FUEL I'LL NEED FOR THIS WEEKEND.



Maya closed her eyes, drinking in the feel of Jade's latex-clad hands on her skin, cool, smooth, and sliding slowly downwards. She felt that familiar pleasant twinge deep inside. She couldn't speak, she couldn't leave, she could do nothing but submit!

Grinning behind her gag, she thought... "Let's do this!"



AND NOW...
WE WAIT.

First!
...to eat shit!
Phew, so glad to see you back. been kinda worried you quit on us. anyhoo, lovin the new story! :)
AWW!
Awesome story! That being said, when are we getting more Lisbeth and Allison stories? Gimmegimmegimme!!!
Yeah, this!
Really loved the dynamics of this one. Situations were hot but still low tier compared to your other stuff. Then again Allison, Lisbeth and Sarah have been around much longer, so that makes sense. looking forward to more Jade and Maya, and hey.... MORE LISBETH! COME OOON!!!!!

These girls need some good dick!

Well, i guess you're out of the picture then!

So when are we getting more Lisbeth and Allison stories?

ARGHH.

There is only one mistress, and her name is Allison!
Tho, Jade is nice! :P

Okay, you're back! so, when is Lisbeth coming back?

SO...TWELVE DAYS AFTER MOVING OUT FROM ALLY'S PLACE -- HOW WAS I COPING?

MMMMMNNNNGGGGHHHH!!!

10/10 DOING JUST FUCKING FINE!

BUT YEAH...MOVING OUT...I GUESS I SHOULD ADDRESS THAT.

THE THING IS...

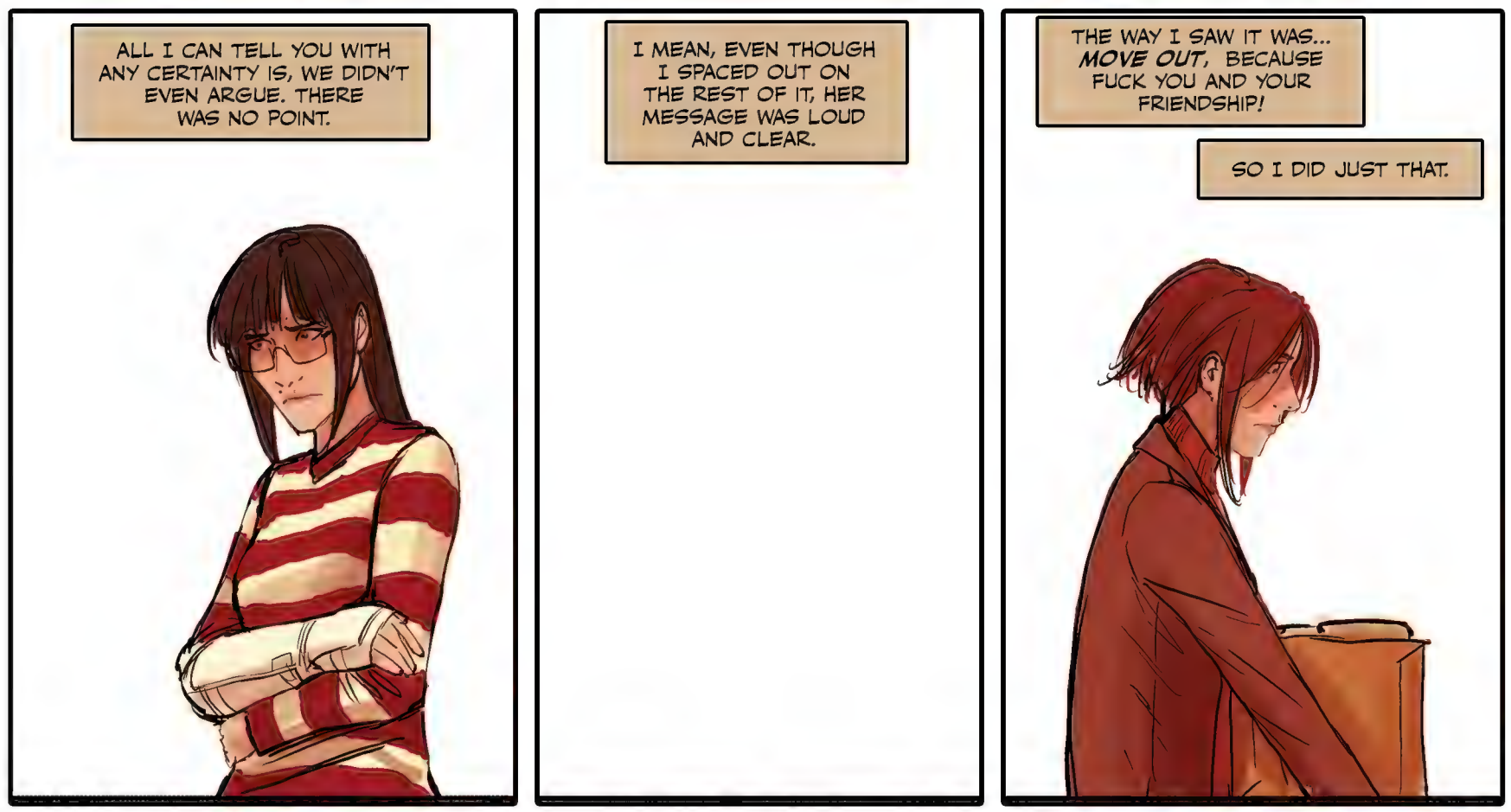
THERE WASN'T MUCH TO IT...

NOT MUCH THAT I REMEMBER, THAT IS.

SEE...AFTER SHE SAID: *"YOU SHOULD MOVE OUT,"* EVERYTHING GOT KIND OF EMPTY AND DISTORTED.

I GUESS THAT'S THE SIDE EFFECT OF HAVING YOUR HEART TORN OUT. YOU ARE LEFT WITH AN ***ECHOEY*** CAVITY THAT ENDS UP JUST DISTORTING EVERYTHING YOU HEAR.

SO MY MEMORIES OF THAT CONVERSATION ARE SOMEWHAT SKETCHY... FRAGMENTED.



I MOVED BACK INTO MY OLD PLACE. IT WAS AVAILABLE. I GUESS MS. DERRINGER, THE LANDLADY, DIDN'T FIND ANY TAKERS. WHAT WITH THE PRICE AND...HER CHARM.

KEEP IN MIND, I HAVE...

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR LATE RENT...I KNOW. I LIVED HERE.

MHMM!

HOME SWEET...

Y'KNOW WHAT? I'LL SPARE YOU MY TEARS...

I SPENT THOSE DAYS WALKING AROUND WITH A HOLLOW PAIN IN BOTH MY HEART AND STOMACH.

I GUESS HEARTACHE SOUNDS MORE ROMANTIC THAN STOMACHACHE, BUT I SWEAR THEY BOTH FELT THE SAME.

I MISSED HER. IT HURT WHEN I BROKE UP WITH DAVID, BUT WITH ALLY... OH GOD...IT WAS TEN TIMES WORSE.

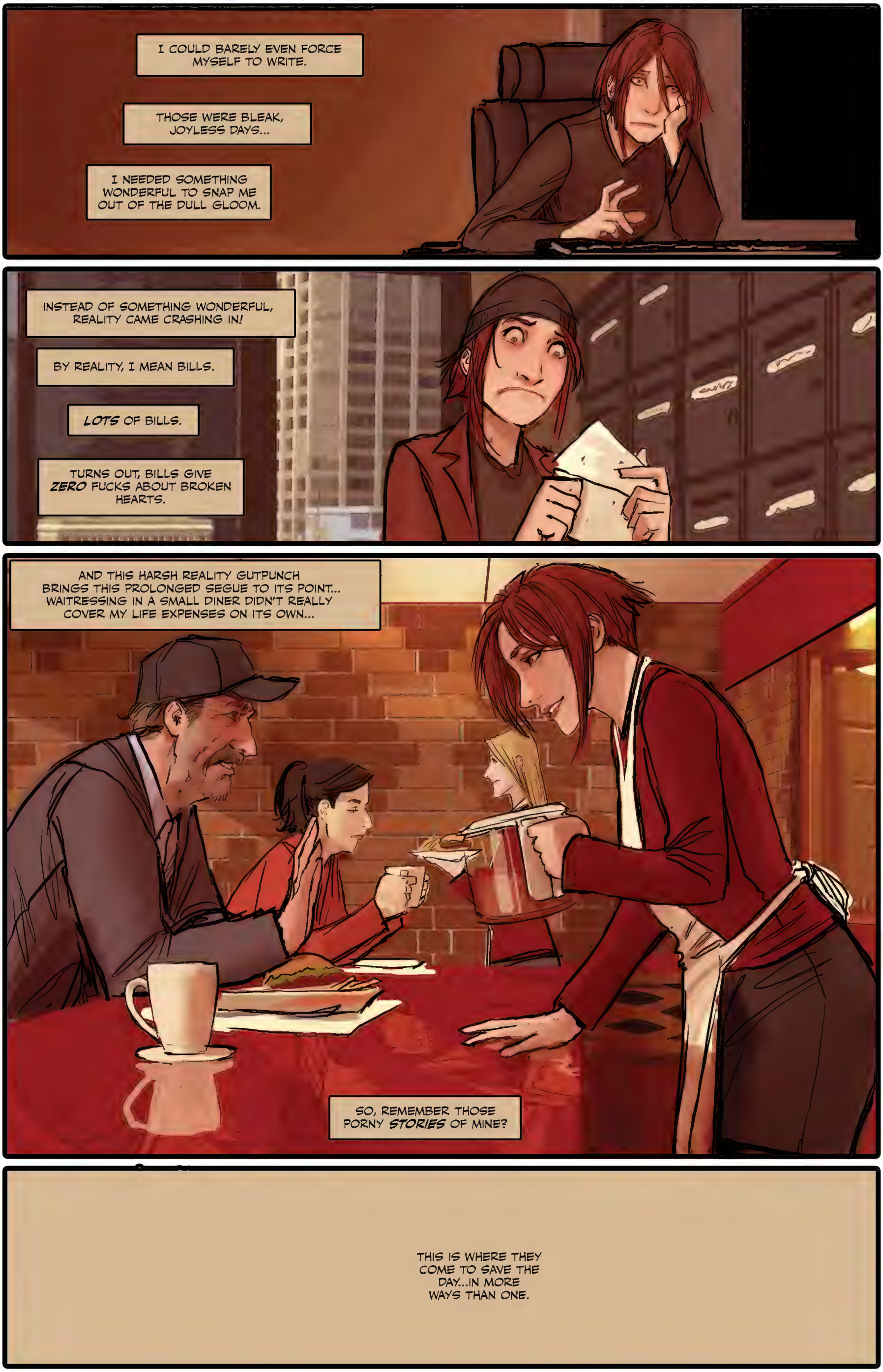
SUFFICE TO SAY, MY NOVEMBER WAS OFF TO A SHITTY START.

I WAS A *ZOMBIE* AT WORK.

COFFEE?

NO, THANK YOU. UMM...YOU SEEM LIKE *YOU* COULD USE SOME.

MY ATTEMPTS AT DISTRACTING MYSELF WITH BOOKS FAILED MISERABLY.


I COULD BARELY EVEN FORCE MYSELF TO WRITE.
THOSE WERE BLEAK, JOYLESS DAYS...
I NEEDED SOMETHING WONDERFUL TO SNAP ME OUT OF THE DULL GLOOM.
INSTEAD OF SOMETHING WONDERFUL, REALITY CAME CRASHING IN!
BY REALITY, I MEAN BILLS.
LOTS OF BILLS.
TURNS OUT, BILLS GIVE ZERO FUCKS ABOUT BROKEN HEARTS.
AND THIS HARSH REALITY GUTPUNCH BRINGS THIS PROLONGED SEGUE TO ITS POINT... WAITRESSING IN A SMALL DINER DIDN'T REALLY COVER MY LIFE EXPENSES ON ITS OWN...
SO, REMEMBER THOSE PORNY STORIES OF MINE?
THIS IS WHERE THEY COME TO SAVE THE DAY...IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

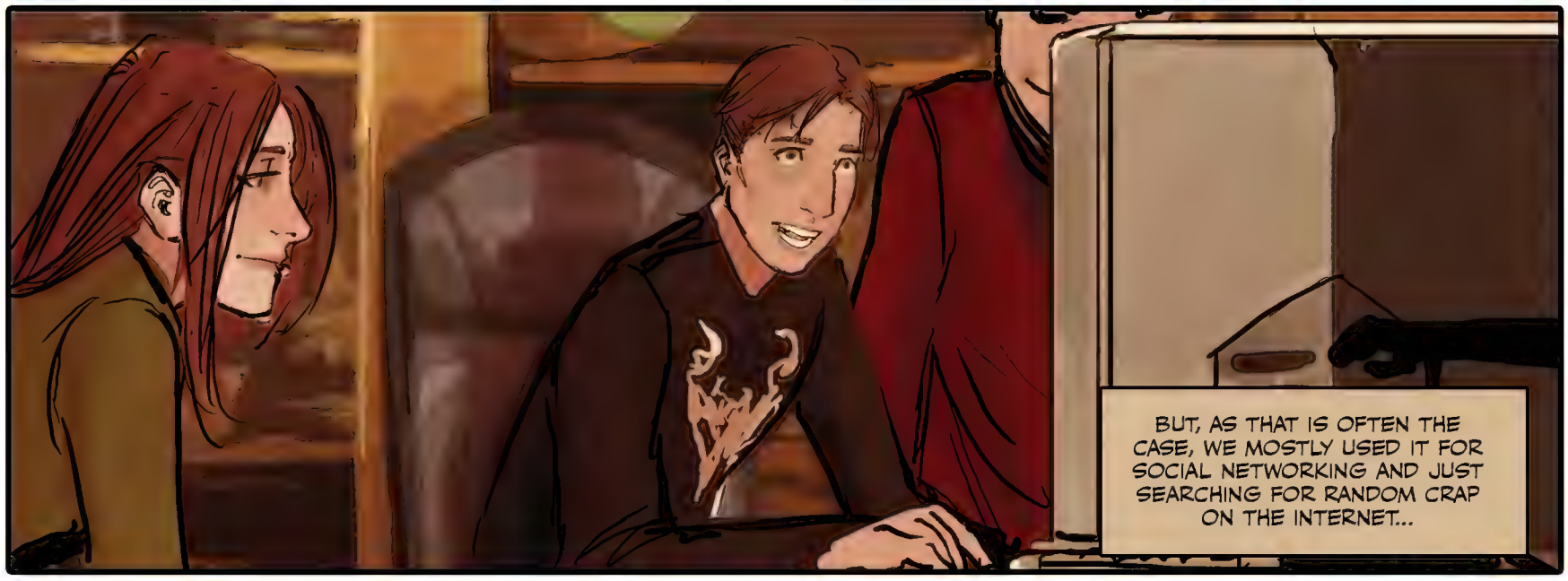
SO...HOW DO YOU BECOME AN INTERNET PORN STORY WRITER?

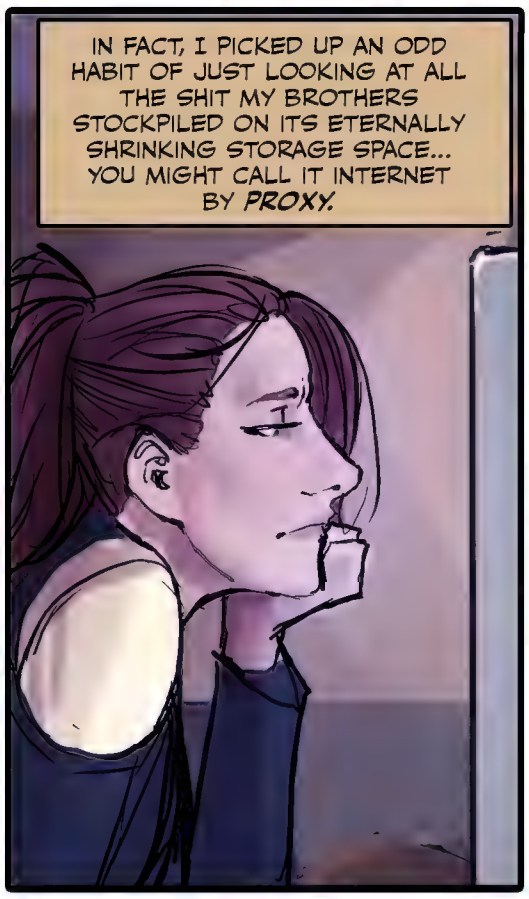
NO IDEA! I CAN ONLY TELL YOU HOW *I* BECAME ONE.

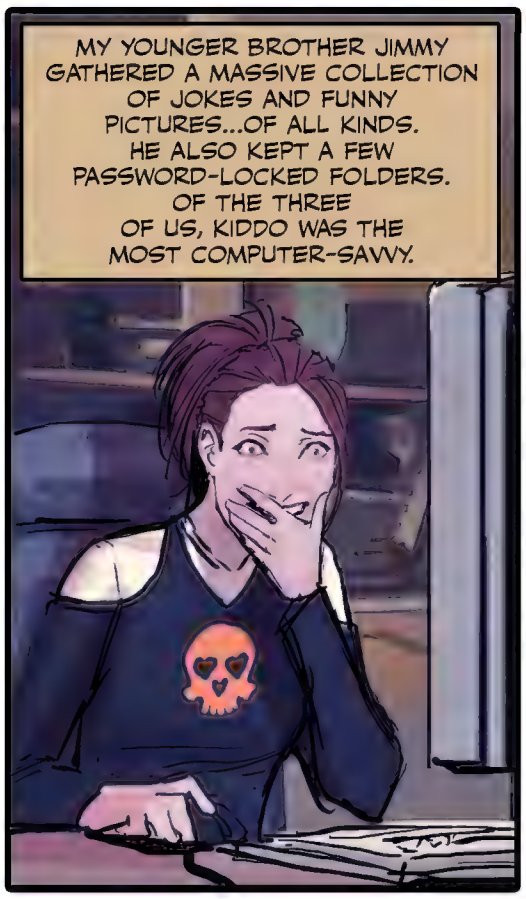
I WAS SEVENTEEN WHEN WE GOT OUR FIRST PC.

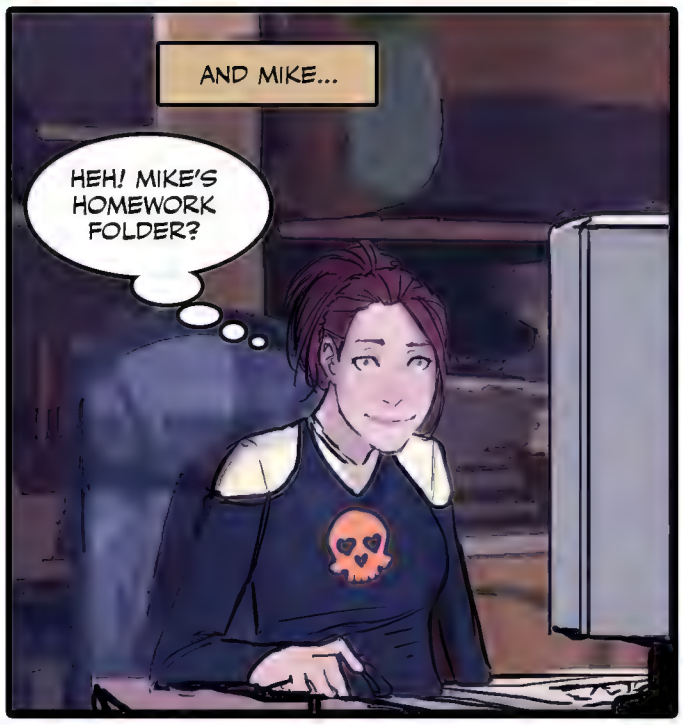
JUST...BEAR WITH ME, I'M *GOING* SOMEWHERE WITH THIS.

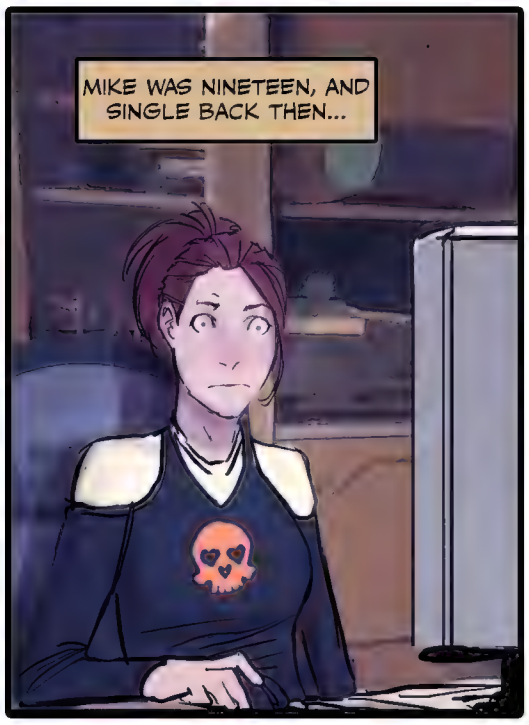
MY BROTHERS AND I NEEDED A COMPUTER...WELL, MORE SPECIFICALLY WE NEEDED INTERNET FOR SCHOOL PURPOSES.











HONESTLY, IN A WEIRD WAY I ENVIED HIM A LITTLE...

AT LEAST HIS TASTES WERE SIMPLE. VANILLA STUFF, SOME LINGERIE, THAT'S ABOUT IT.

ME...I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO PUT MINE INTO WORDS.

I WAS THE WEIRD GIRL WHO WOULD, AT TIMES, TIE HER OWN HANDS WITH A HAIRBAND BEFORE MASTURBATING.

BACK THEN, I WAS UNAWARE OF THE TERM ***BDSM***. THE ONLY RELATED WORD I KNEW WAS ***"DOMINATRIX"*** AND TO ME IT MEANT A WOMAN WHO ***WHIPS*** PEOPLE...

NOT REALLY SOMETHING I FELT LIKE SEARCHING ONLINE...

SO YEAH, I TURNED TO BOOKS.

BACK IN THOSE DAYS, I MOSTLY READ FANTASY, ADVENTURE, AND SUPERNATURAL-THEMED BOOKS. HOWEVER, ON A WHIM ONE DAY I TURNED TO THE ROMANCE SECTION...

AND NOT THE ***GOOD*** ROMANCE...

OKAY, SO I NOTICED A COVER WHERE THE HEROINE WAS BOUND...IT ***PIQUED*** MY INTEREST.

I STARTED DEVOURING THESE BOOKS. THERE WAS SEX IN THEM. MOST OF IT VANILLA...BUT IN THOSE RARE OCCASIONS, WHEN THINGS GOT A LITTLE KINKY... WELL, LET'S SAY I WAS...***RESPONSIVE.***

BUT AGAIN...IT WAS ALL SO SPORADIC. SO RANDOM AND HARD TO FIND. EVEN THE COVERS WERE ALL TOO OFTEN DECEPTIVE.

I NEEDED MORE...I NEEDED BETTER.

I NEEDED...***THE INTERNET!***

THIS TIME I HAD AN ***EXACT*** IDEA WHAT I WAS AFTER!

SIGH... FALSE ADVERTISING.

CAPTAIN'S BRIDE

THIS ONE INTERNET SEARCH ENDED UP BEING ONE OF THE MOST ***DEFINING*** MOMENTS OF MY SECRETIVE SEXUAL AND CREATIVE LIFE.

bondage stories

18+ enter

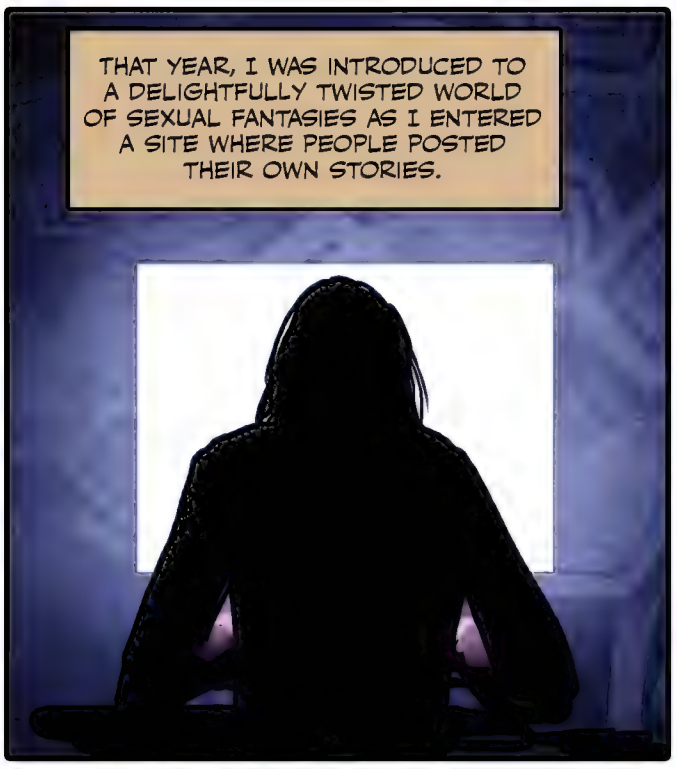
18- leave

OH, WELL...I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT TWO MONTHS TIL' MY EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY!

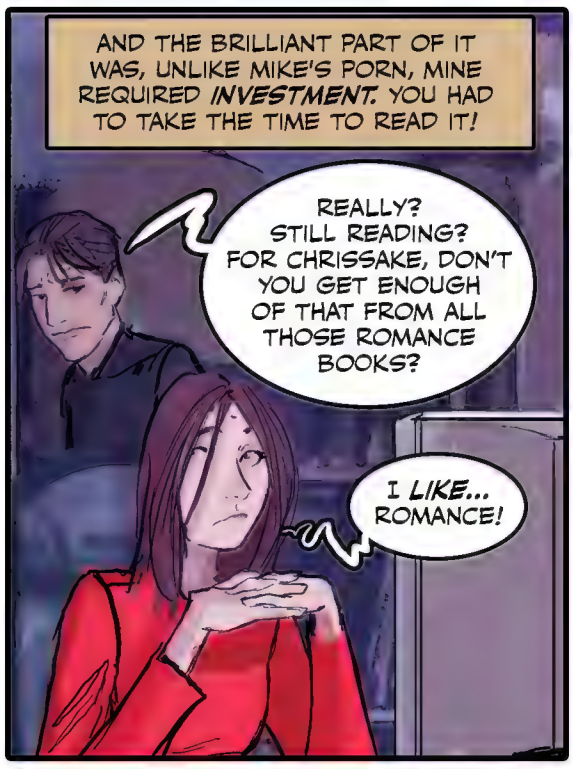
YYYUP!

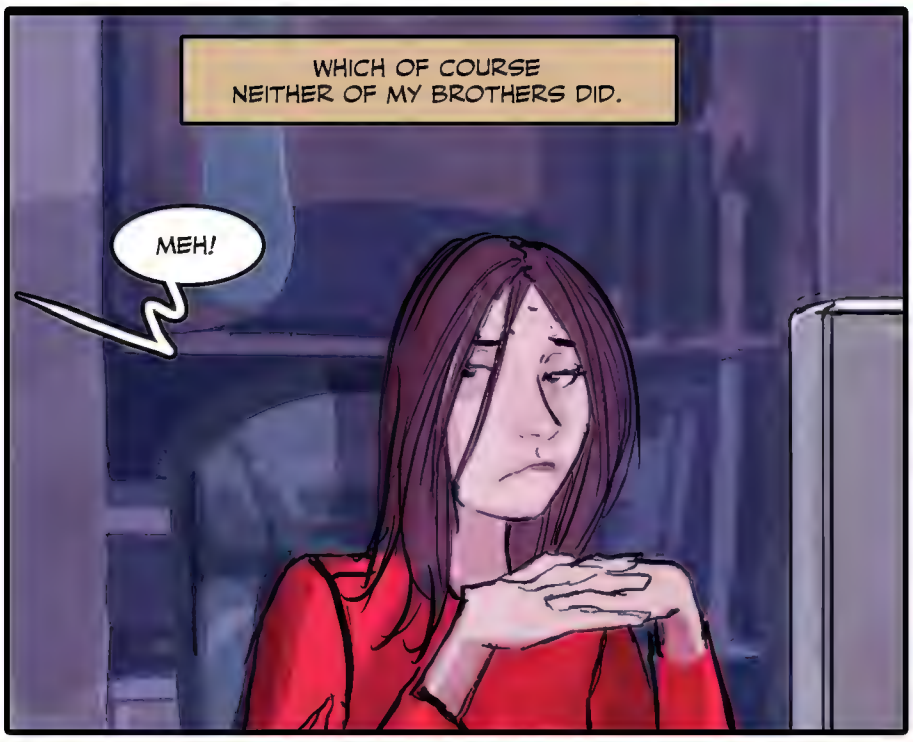
GONNA WAIT!

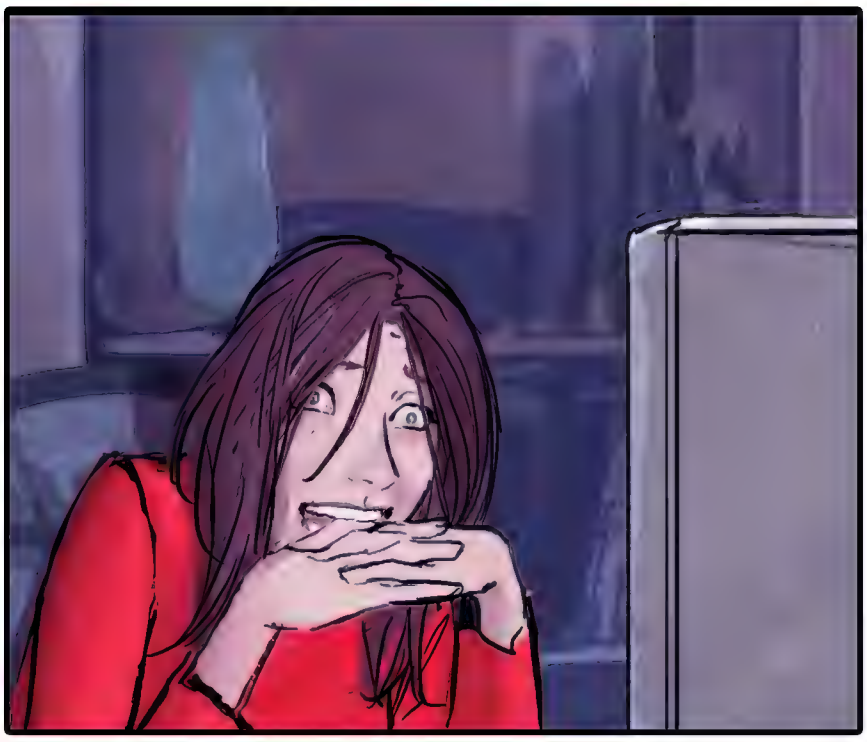
AND I ***TOTALLY*** WAITED!


THAT YEAR, I WAS INTRODUCED TO A DELIGHTFULLY TWISTED WORLD OF SEXUAL FANTASIES AS I ENTERED A SITE WHERE PEOPLE POSTED THEIR OWN STORIES.

OH, THE QUALITY VARIED DRASTICALLY, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER TO ME. I HAD ENTIRE TOMES WORTH OF SMUT TO DEVOUR.


AND THE BRILLIANT PART OF IT WAS, UNLIKE MIKE'S PORN, MINE REQUIRED *INVESTMENT.* YOU HAD TO TAKE THE TIME TO READ IT!
REALLY? STILL READING? FOR CHRISSAKE, DON'T YOU GET ENOUGH OF THAT FROM ALL THOSE ROMANCE BOOKS?
I *LIKE...* ROMANCE!


WHICH OF COURSE NEITHER OF MY BROTHERS DID.
MEH!



OVER TIME I FOUND SEVERAL WRITERS WHOSE CREATIONS I FOLLOWED RELIGIOUSLY, AND I REALIZED THAT I WAS FAR FROM ALONE. THESE PEOPLE WERE *STARS*. REVERED AMONG THE COMMUNITY. DISCUSSED ABOUT IN LENGTHY FORUM THREADS.
ALSO...LISA, AGE EIGHTEEN. NEVER HAD SEX, KNOWS WHAT A BALLGAG, BUTTPLUG, ARMBINDER, STRAP-ON DILDO, AND A POSTURE COLLAR ARE.

THAT WAS ROUGHLY WHEN I REALIZED -- I WANTED THAT.
THE...WRITING FAME THING... I MEAN I KINDA WANTED THE OTHER STUFF AS WELL, BUT YEAH, I WANTED TO BE BIG ON THOSE SITES.

I WILL FOREVER REMEMBER THE *ANXIETY* OF SUBMITTING MY FIRST STORY...

OVERALL SCORE, 3,4 OUT OF 5 STARS.

I SPENT THE WHOLE DAY UNSURE WHETHER TO FEEL ELATED OR BUMMED OUT...

BUT I KNEW ONE THING. I HAD A *LONG* ROAD AHEAD OF ME.

I *NEVER* GAVE UP; MY STORIES GOT *BETTER!* IN STRUCTURE, CHARACTER WRITING AS WELL AS THE ABILITY TO GET MY AUDIENCE HOT AND BOTHERED. SLOWLY BUT SURELY, MY RATINGS GOT HIGHER. A FEW YEARS PASSED AND I WAS ONE OF THE *BIG* ONES. A *STAR* IN THE COMMUNITY. A *SOMEBODY!*

OKAY, IT WAS IN AN *OBSCURE* PART OF THE INTERNET THAT MEANT NOTHING TO NOBODY, BUT IT MEANT SOMETHING TO *ME!*

AND OVER TIME, WITH THE INTERNET'S EVOLUTION, OPPORTUNITIES AROSE. I SET UP A SORT OF A DIGITAL TIP JAR FOR PEOPLE WHO WANTED TO SUPPORT MY STORIES.

AND PEOPLE DID JUST THAT. OH, IT WAS NOTHING I COULD LIVE BY, BUT IT SURE AS HELL PATCHED THE BUDGET HOLES IN MY THINLY STRETCHED WAITRESS SALARY.

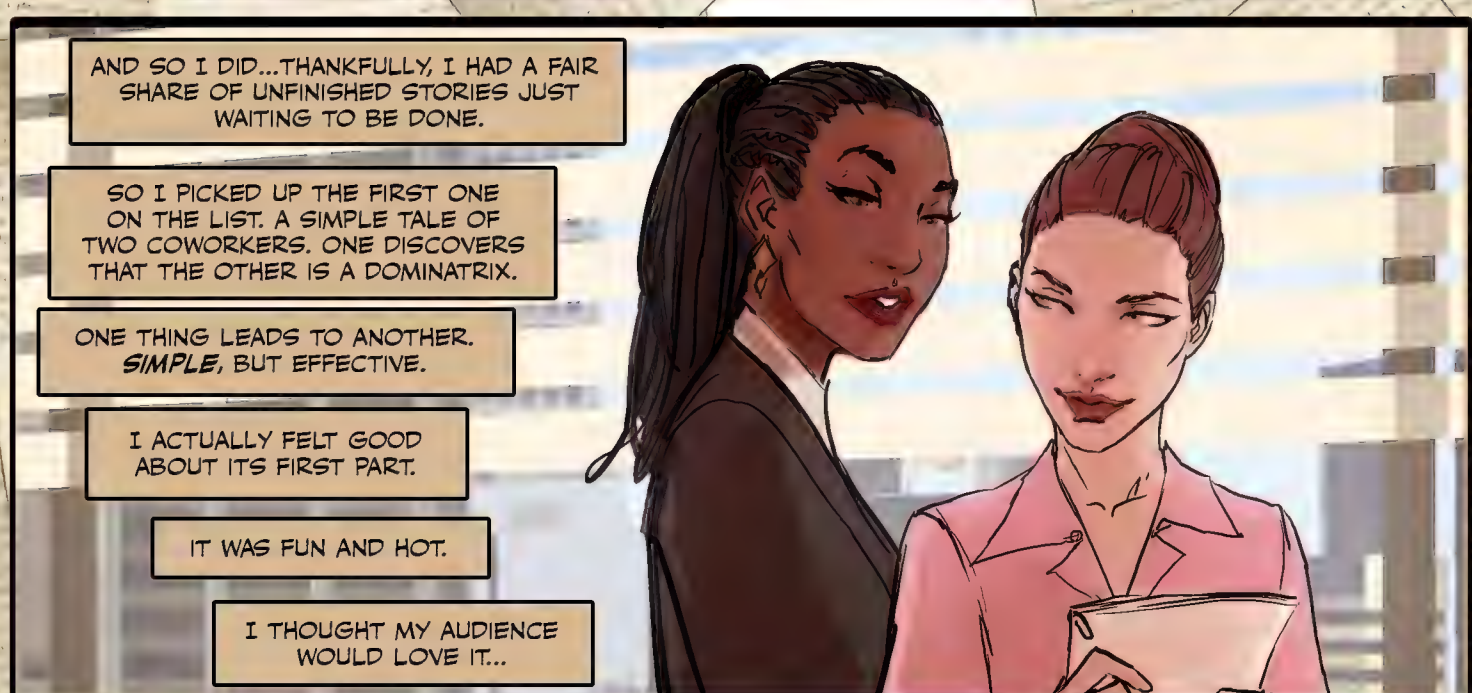
YOU MIGHT SAY, I WAS *MODERATELY* MAKIN' IT RAIN!

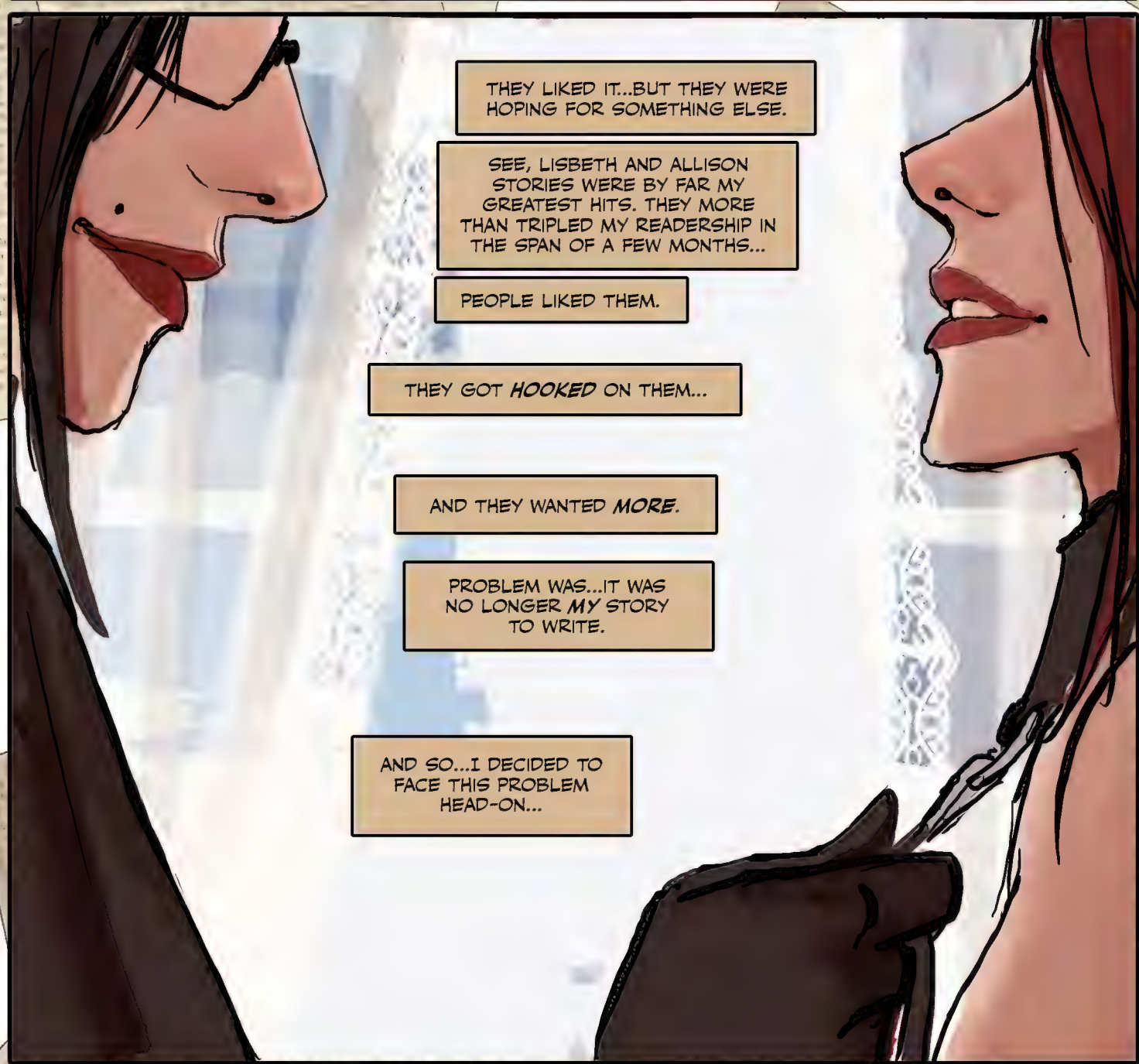
AND ULTIMATELY, MOST UNEXPECTEDLY...THESE STORIES BROUGHT *ALLY* INTO MY LIFE.

First time reader and all i can say is: binge time! :P

I AM NOT OVERLY PRONE TO ROMANTICIZING MY OWN LIFE'S EXPERIENCES, BUT *NOBODY* WILL EVER TAKE THIS REALIZATION FROM ME! FLOWERS AND ALL!
MY STORIES WERE UNADDRESSED LETTERS TO SOMEONE WHO WOULD FULLY UNDERSTAND THEIR MEANING...
AND THEY FOUND *HER*... AND SHE FOUND *THEM*...

YET, IT WAS FOR FAR LESS ROMANTIC REASONS THAT I STARTED WRITING THAT NOVEMBER.
AS PREVIOUSLY STATED, MY WAITRESS SALARY WAS NOT ENOUGH. IF I PLANNED ON, YOU KNOW, EATING, I HAD TO ONCE AGAIN MODERATELY MAKE IT RAIN.
I HAD TO WRITE.


AND SO I DID...THANKFULLY, I HAD A FAIR SHARE OF UNFINISHED STORIES JUST WAITING TO BE DONE.
SO I PICKED UP THE FIRST ONE ON THE LIST. A SIMPLE TALE OF TWO COWORKERS. ONE DISCOVERS THAT THE OTHER IS A DOMINATRIX.
ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER. *SIMPLE*, BUT EFFECTIVE.
I ACTUALLY FELT GOOD ABOUT ITS FIRST PART.
IT WAS FUN AND HOT.
I THOUGHT MY AUDIENCE WOULD LOVE IT...


THEY LIKED IT...BUT THEY WERE HOPING FOR SOMETHING ELSE.
SEE, LISBETH AND ALLISON STORIES WERE BY FAR MY GREATEST HITS. THEY MORE THAN TRIPLED MY READERSHIP IN THE SPAN OF A FEW MONTHS...
PEOPLE LIKED THEM.
THEY GOT *HOOKED* ON THEM...
AND THEY WANTED *MORE*.
PROBLEM WAS...IT WAS NO LONGER *MY* STORY TO WRITE.
AND SO...I DECIDED TO FACE THIS PROBLEM HEAD-ON...

OH, COME ON! JUST A CUP OF COFFEE FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!

I SAID NO. I HAVE...DEADLINES.

ALLY, YOU HAVEN'T LEFT THE DAMN HOUSE FOR OVER A WEEK NOW.

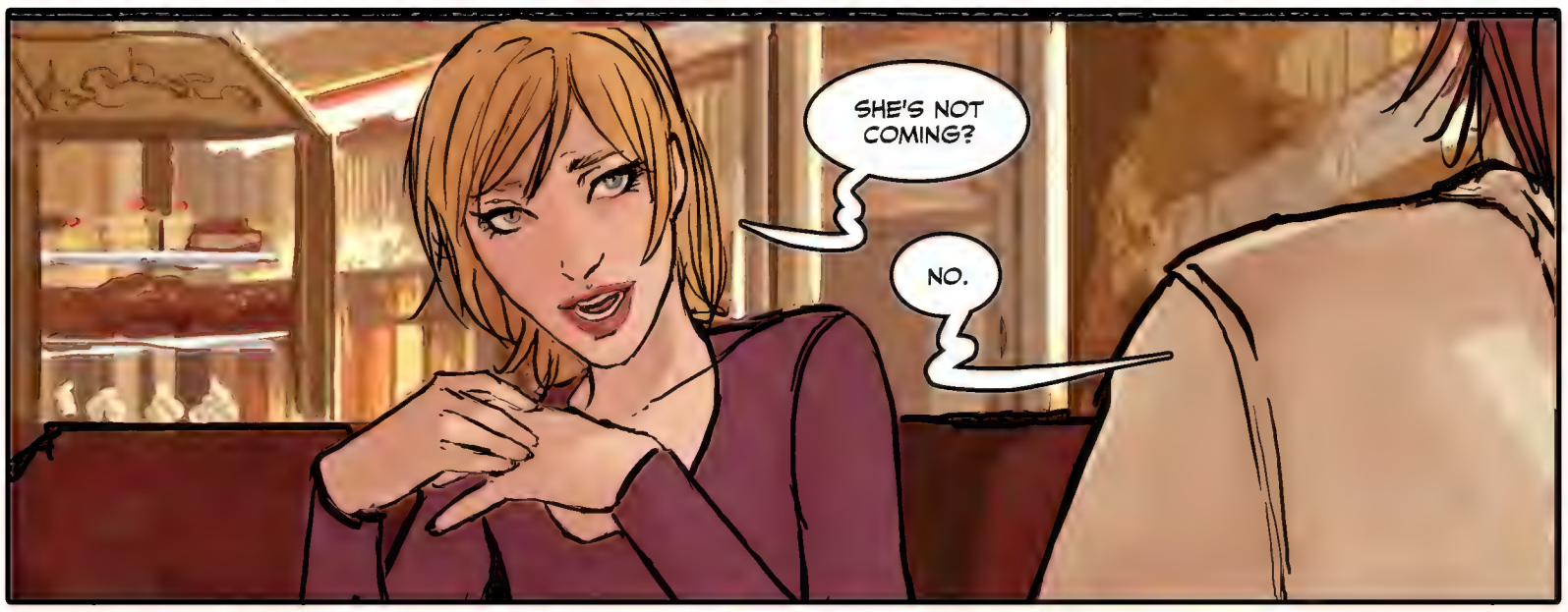
I HAVE LOTS OF DEADLINES, AND THE FACT THAT LIGAMENTS TAKE AGES TO HEAL ISN'T DOING MUCH FOR MY PROGRESS.

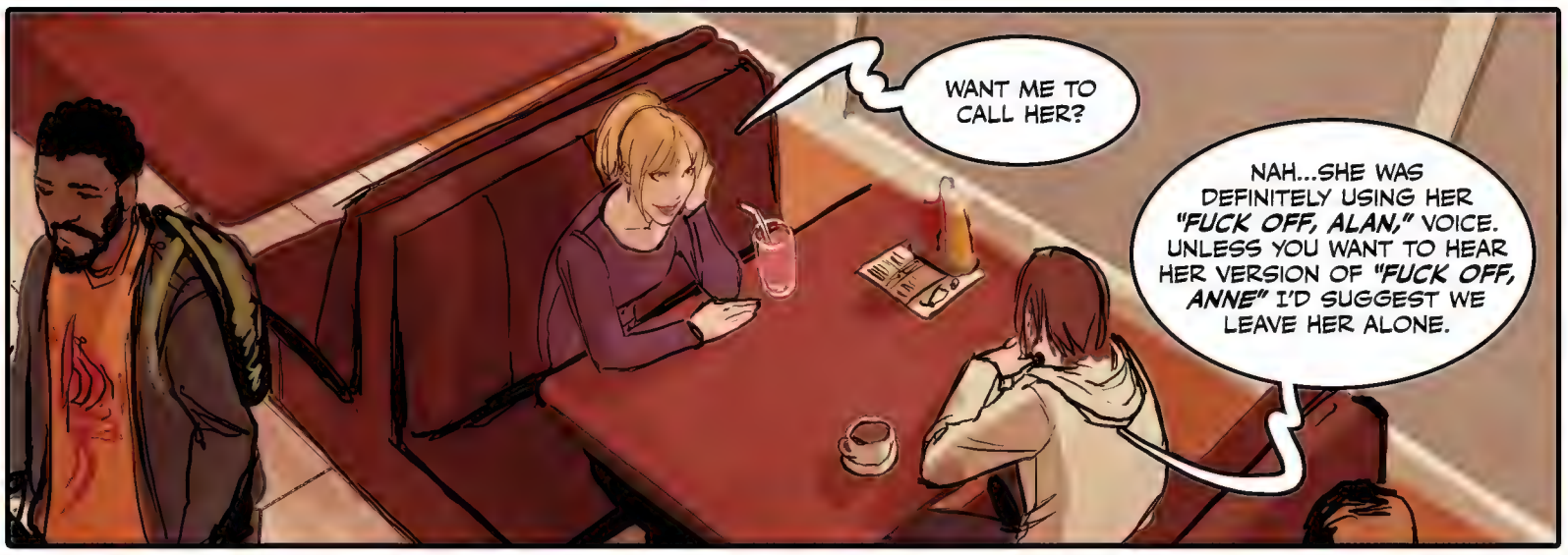
WANT US TO COME OVER?

DUDE!? WHAT PART OF FUCKING DEADLINES DID YOU MISS?

I HAVE A SHIT-TON OF CODE TO GO OVER, GET THROUGH ALL THE BUG REPORTS FROM THE INITIAL TESTS, AND HOPE TO FUCK THAT MY FIXES DON'T END UP CRASHING THE APP IN NEW AND EXCITING WAYS, AND I HAVE TO DO IT ONE-HANDED...SO, NO!

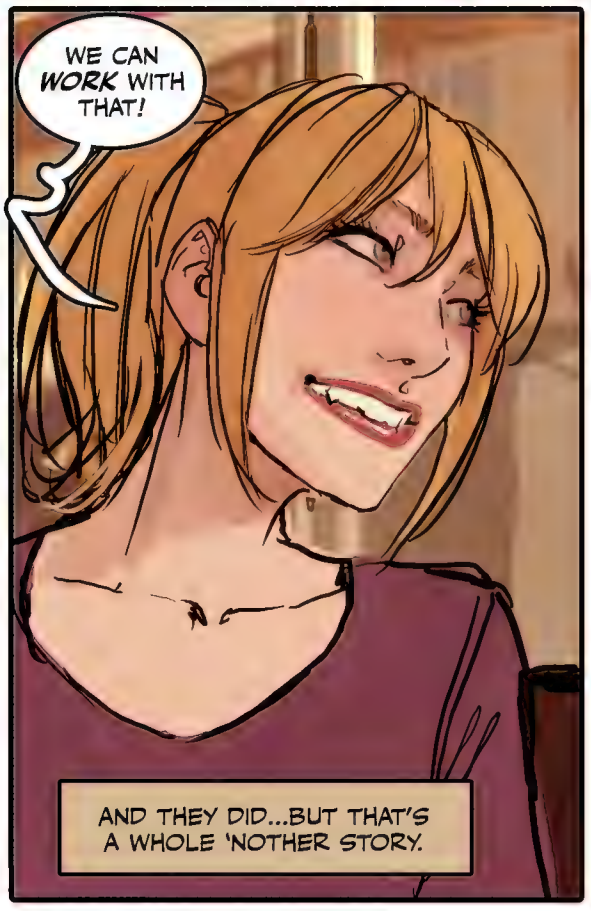
YOU TWO HAVE FUN!


SHE'S NOT COMING?
NO.

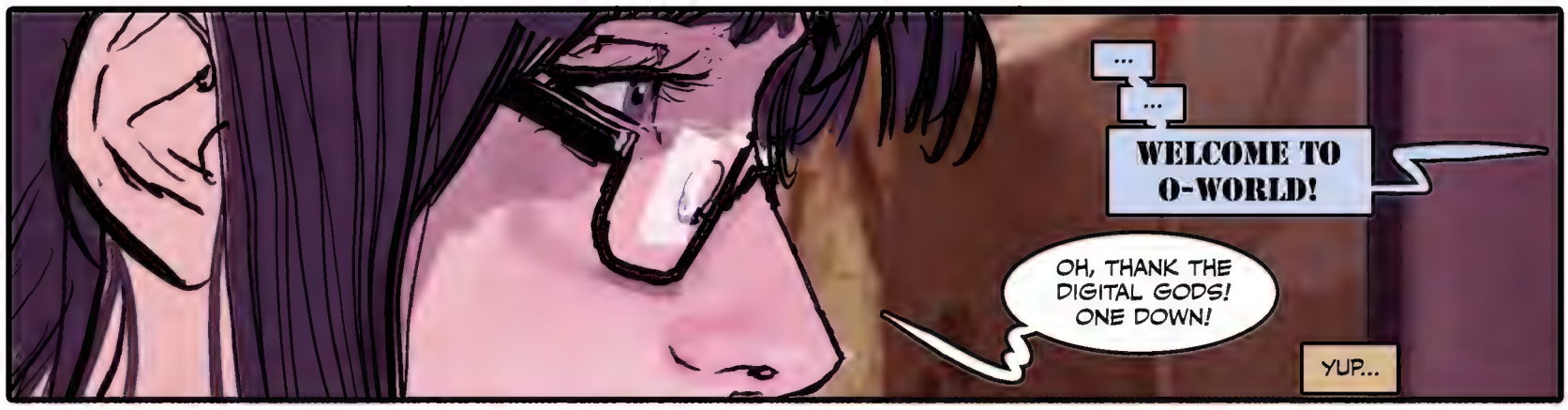

WANT ME TO CALL HER?
NAH...SHE WAS DEFINITELY USING HER *"FUCK OFF, ALAN,"* VOICE. UNLESS YOU WANT TO HEAR HER VERSION OF *"FUCK OFF, ANNE"* I'D SUGGEST WE LEAVE HER ALONE.

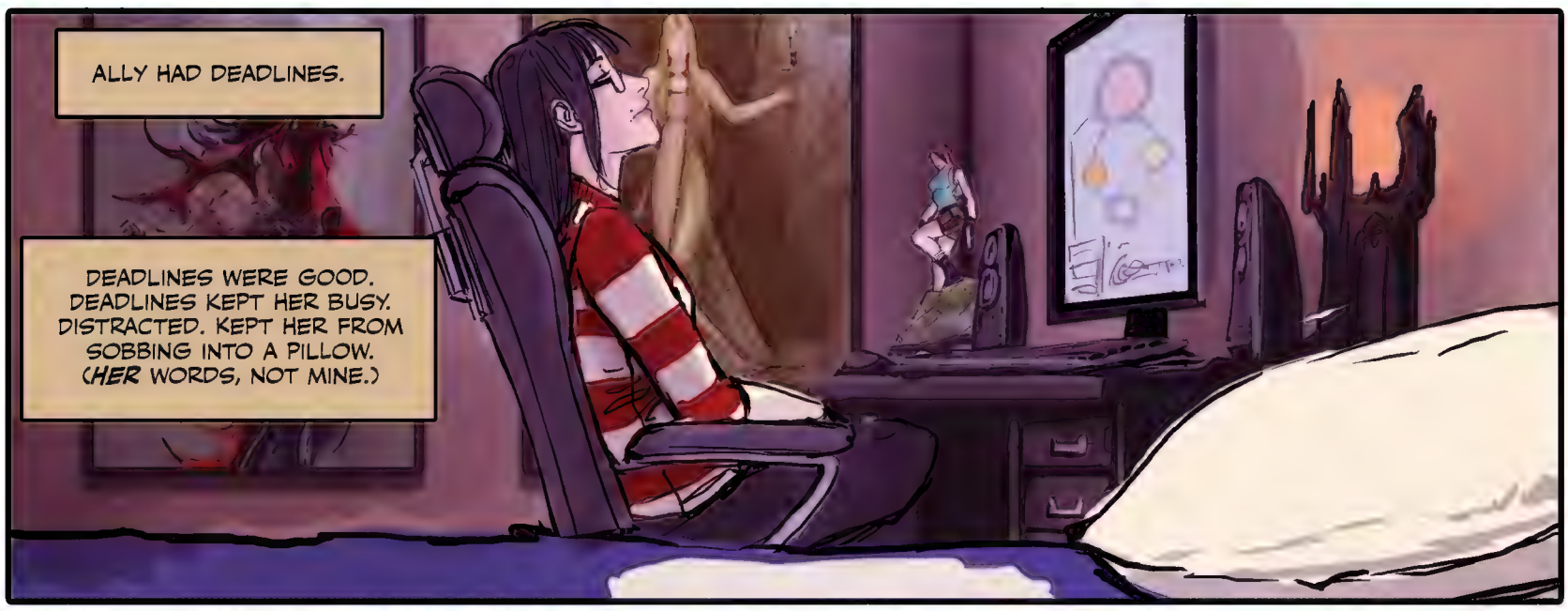
I SEE... SO IT'S *JUST* THE TWO OF US, HUH?

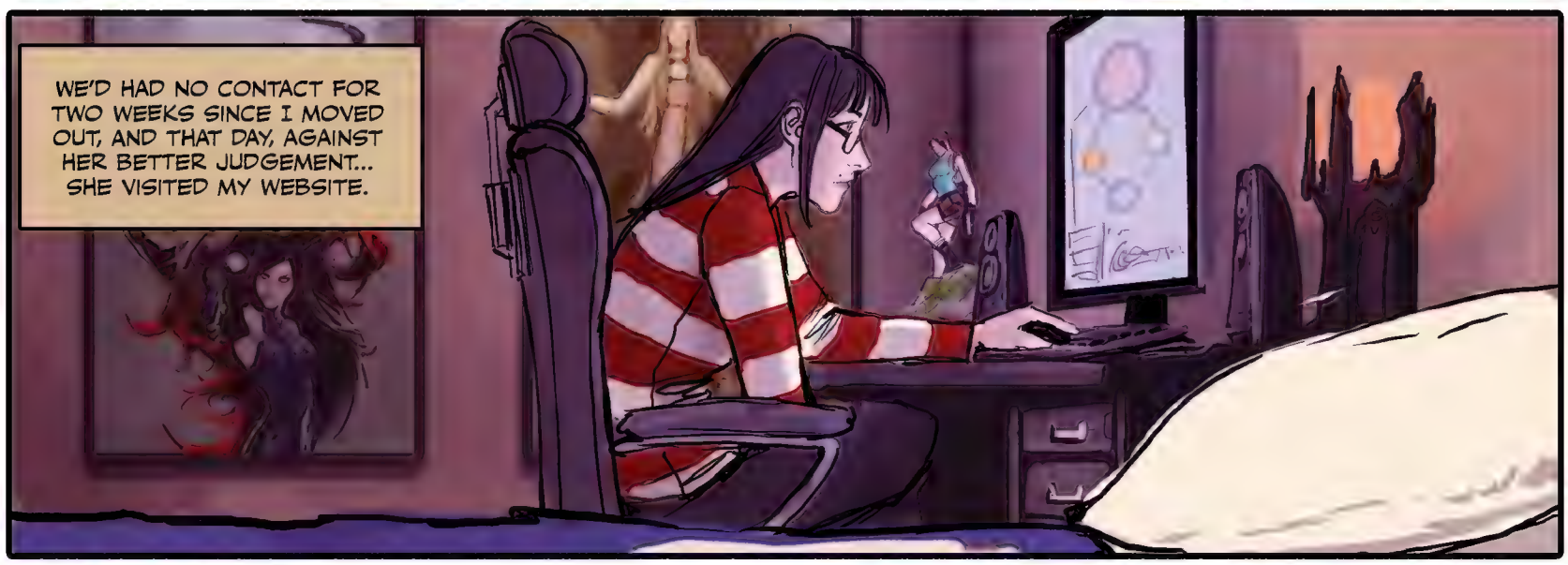
SEEMS SO.

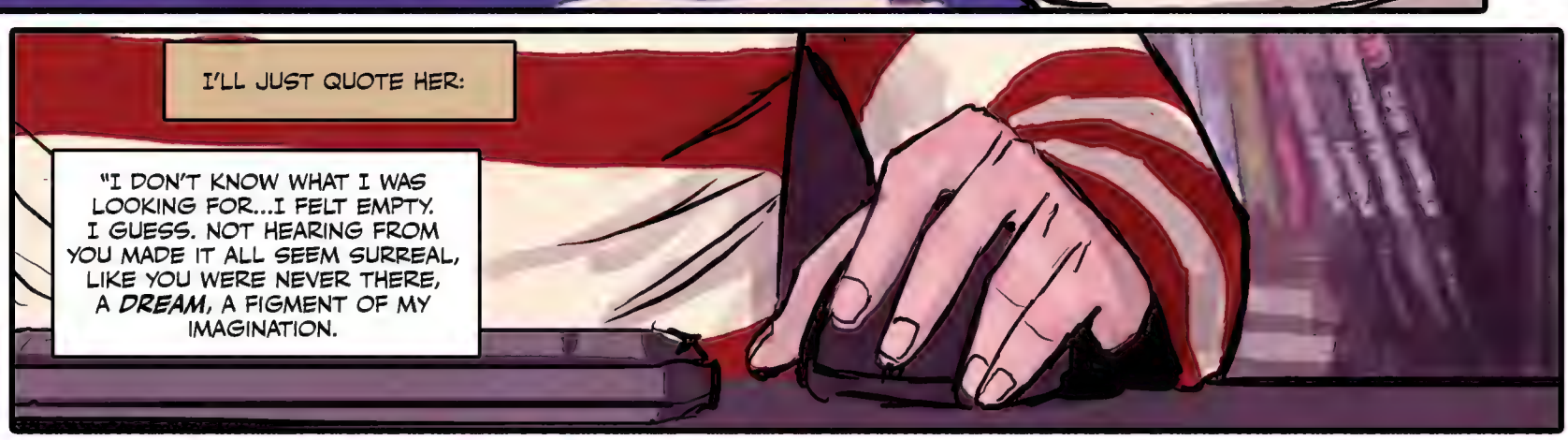

WE CAN *WORK* WITH THAT!
AND THEY DID...BUT THAT'S A WHOLE 'NOTHER STORY.

MEANWHILE, ALLY WAS BUSY TRYING TO GET *OTHER* THINGS TO WORK.
PLEASE! *PLEASE!* DON'T! CRASH!
MOMMY'S GONNA BUY YOU A FRESH PROCESSOR IF YOU DON'T CRASH!

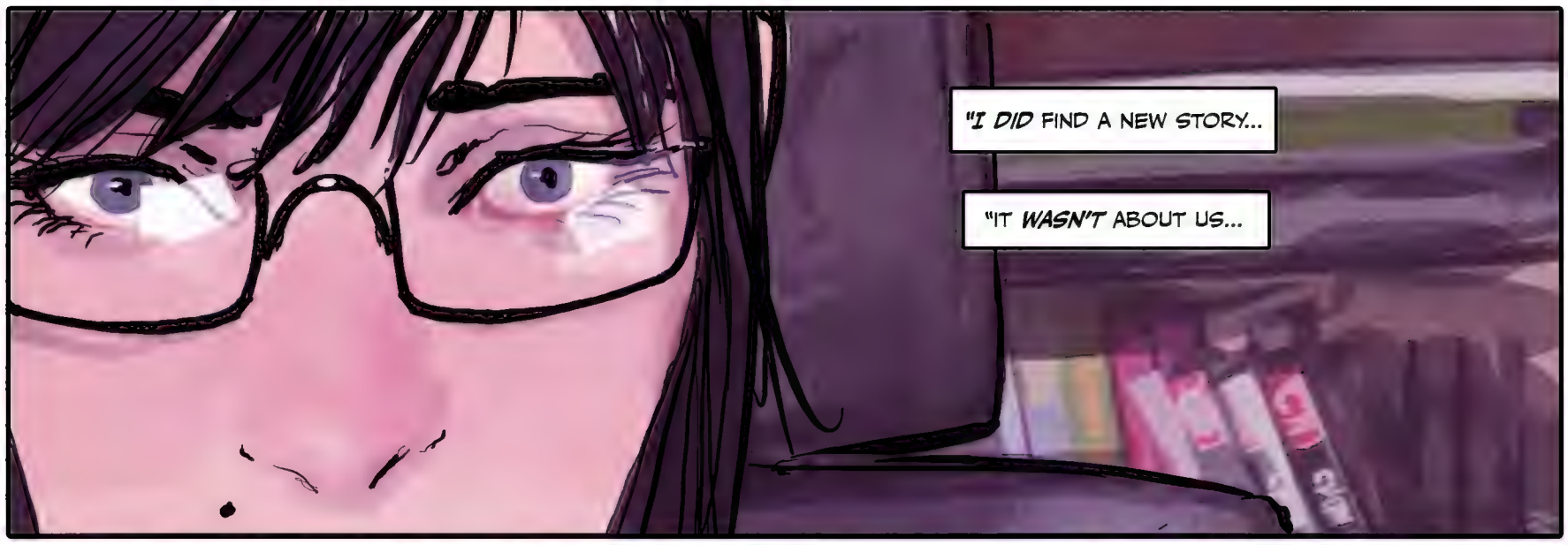

...
...
WELCOME TO O-WORLD!
OH, THANK THE DIGITAL GODS! ONE DOWN!
YUP...

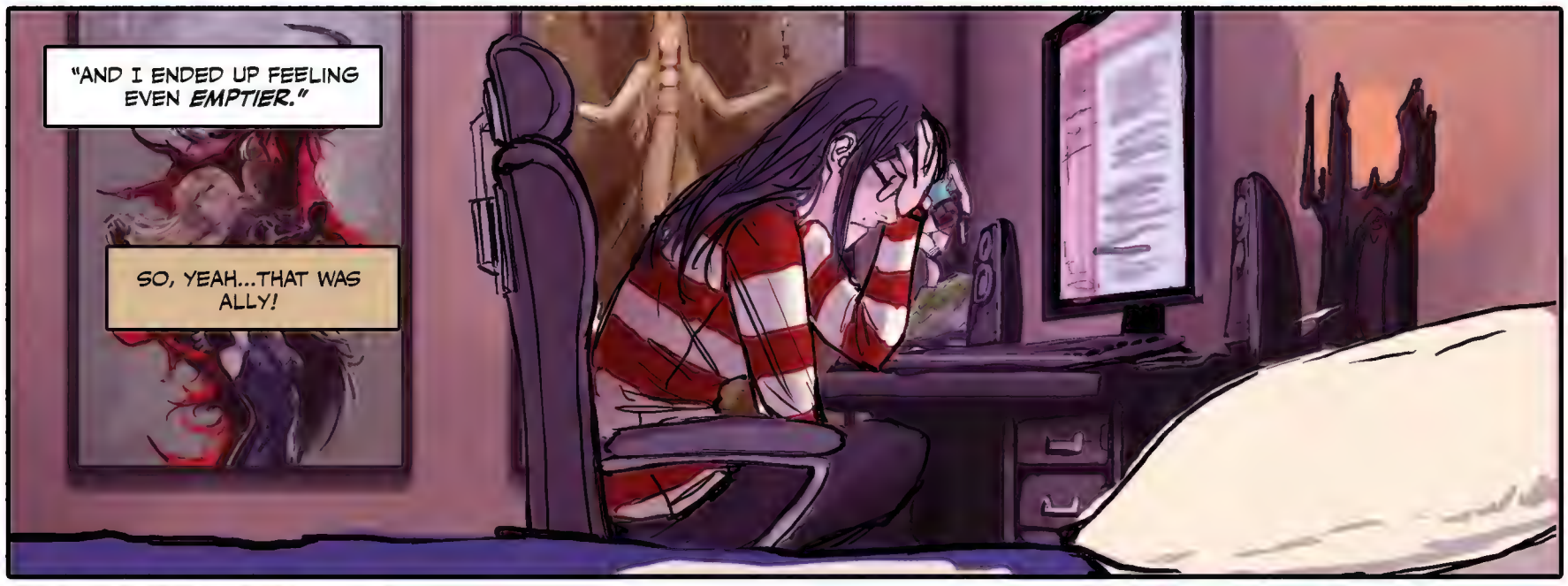

ALLY HAD DEADLINES.
DEADLINES WERE GOOD. DEADLINES KEPT HER BUSY. DISTRACTED. KEPT HER FROM SOBBING INTO A PILLOW. (*HER* WORDS, NOT MINE.)


WE'D HAD NO CONTACT FOR TWO WEEKS SINCE I MOVED OUT, AND THAT DAY, AGAINST HER BETTER JUDGEMENT... SHE VISITED MY WEBSITE.

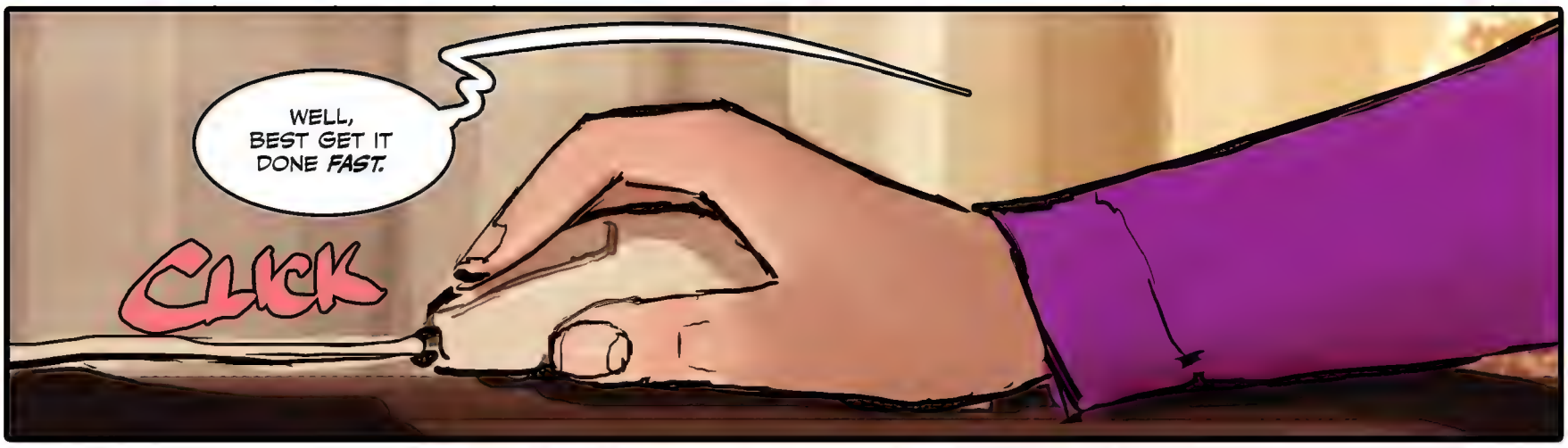

I'LL JUST QUOTE HER:
"I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR...I FELT EMPTY. I GUESS. NOT HEARING FROM YOU MADE IT ALL SEEM SURREAL, LIKE YOU WERE NEVER THERE, A *DREAM*, A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION.

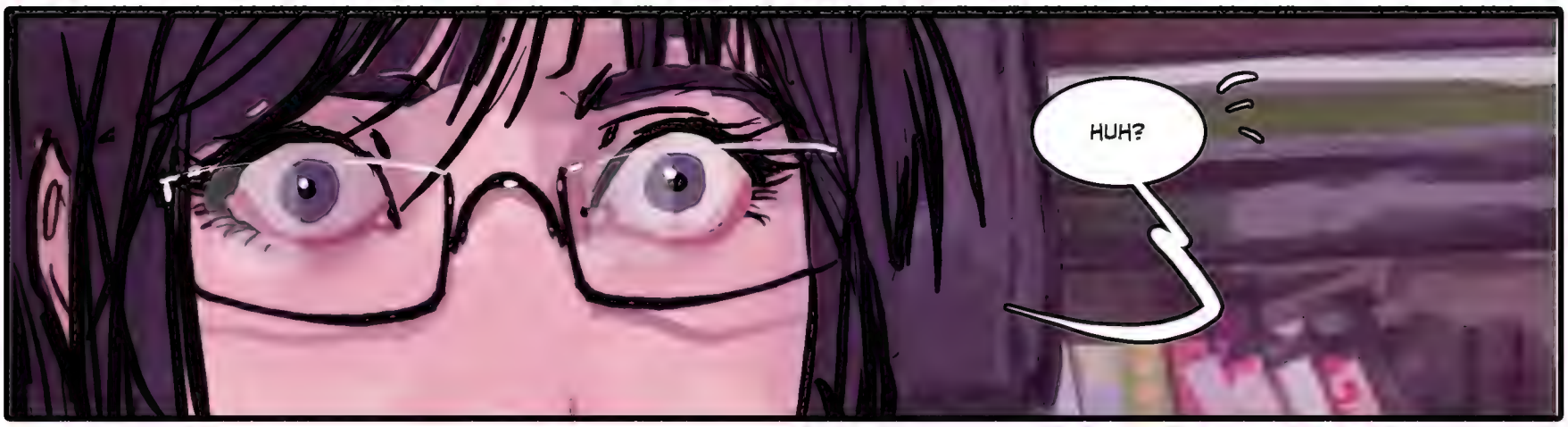
"I WENT TO YOUR SITE THAT DAY TO...I GUESS, DOUBLECHECK.
JADE'S SECRET...ARY
"I THOUGHT...MAYBE YOU WROTE *SOMETHING*, A NEW STORY...A MESSAGE... *ANYTHING*."


"I DID FIND A NEW STORY...
"IT WASN'T ABOUT US...


"AND I ENDED UP FEELING EVEN EMPTIER."
SO, YEAH...THAT WAS ALLY!

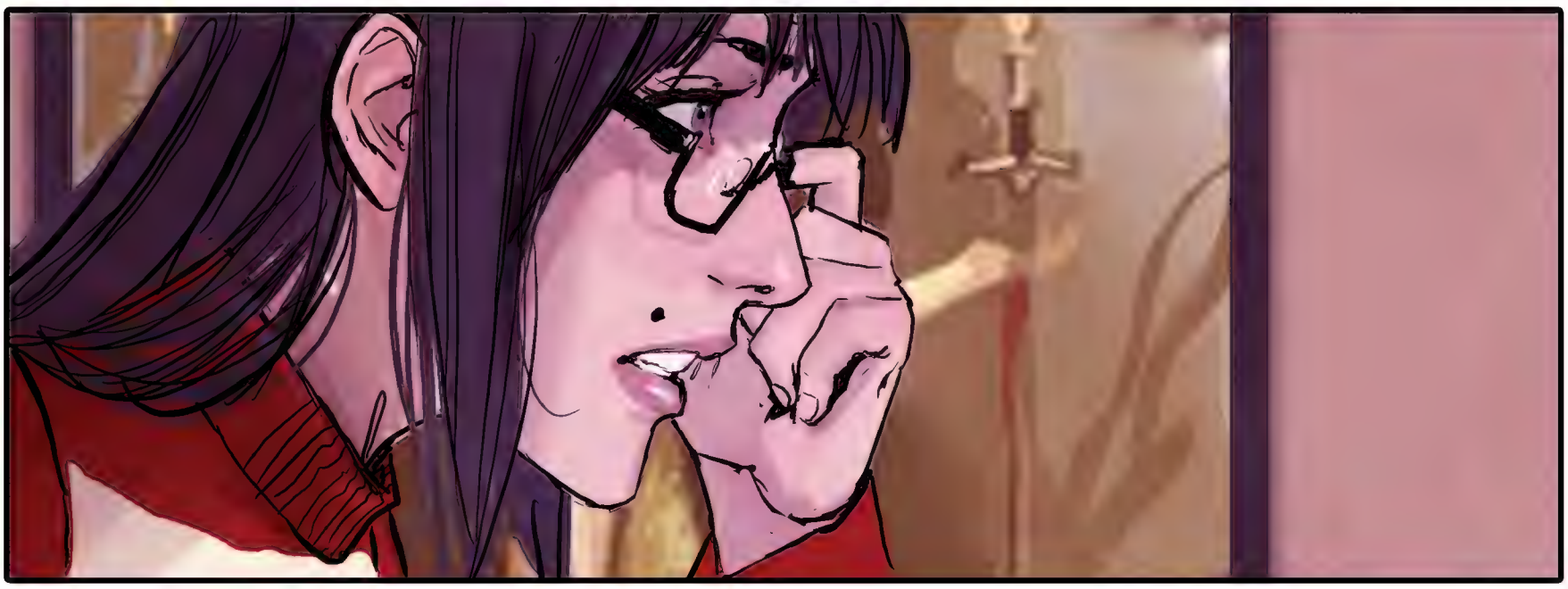
AS FOR ME? WELL... MISERY LOVES COMPANY.
I MEANT WHAT I SAID: LISBETH AND ALLISON'S TALE WAS NO LONGER MY STORY TO WRITE. IT WAS SOMETHING I COULD NO LONGER DELAY ADDRESSING.





Of Allison and Lisbeth

Sometimes , good things come to a bad end, dear reader. This is one such good thing.
The story of Allison and Lisbeth was by far the most



Of Allison and Lisbeth

Sometimes , good things come to a bad end, dear reader. This is one such good thing.
The story of Allison and Lisbeth was by far my most personal bit of writing, but it was a story that started off just for fun. A tongue in cheek nod to a friend and a reader. As our connection grew deeper, so did the importance of this story.

Many of you commented how the tales of Allison and Lisbeth went beyond being just simple porn. You found honesty and humanity in these characters. The reason for that was simple. I cared deeply about her. These stories were more than just a bit of raunchy internet spank material. They were my letters to her.

Like i said. Sometimes good things come to a bad end. It hurts; losing a friend, abandoning a story.

However, it is not my story to tell. Not anymore. Allison was based on her. On my friend. and i feel it would be overstepping many boundaries if i carried on writing as if nothing happenned. For this reason i decided i had to come clean about this situation.

I sincerely apologize, to all of you .

Lisa.

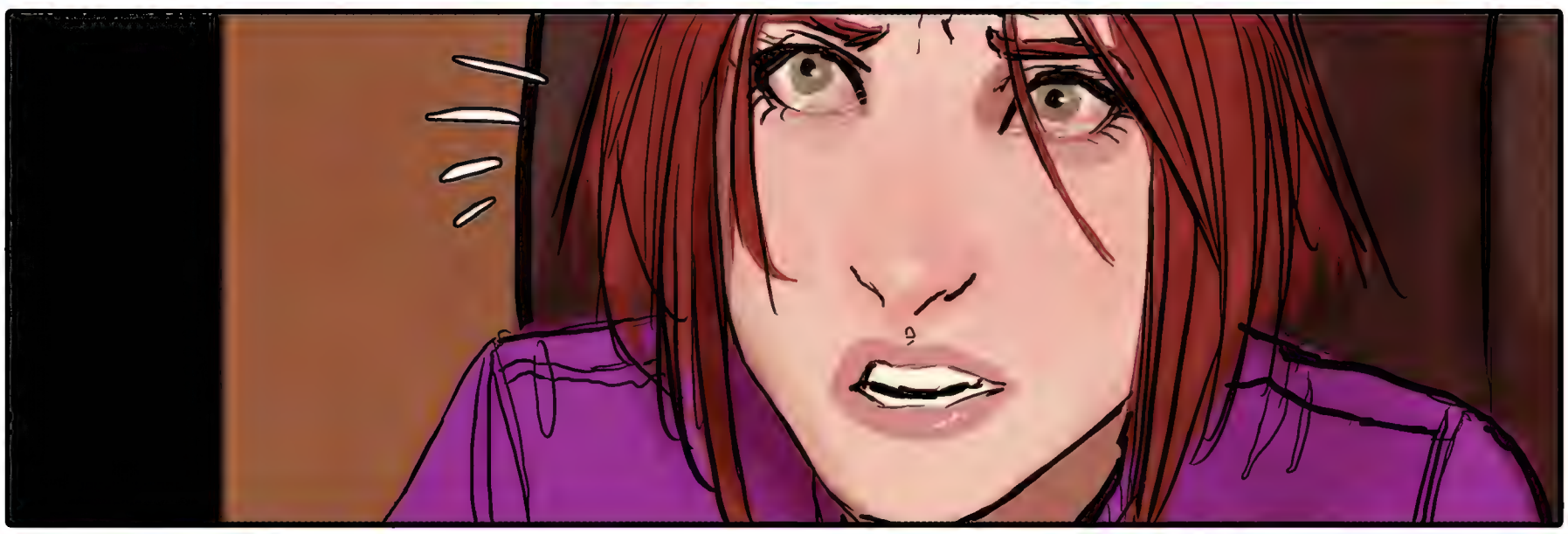
BLIP BLIP

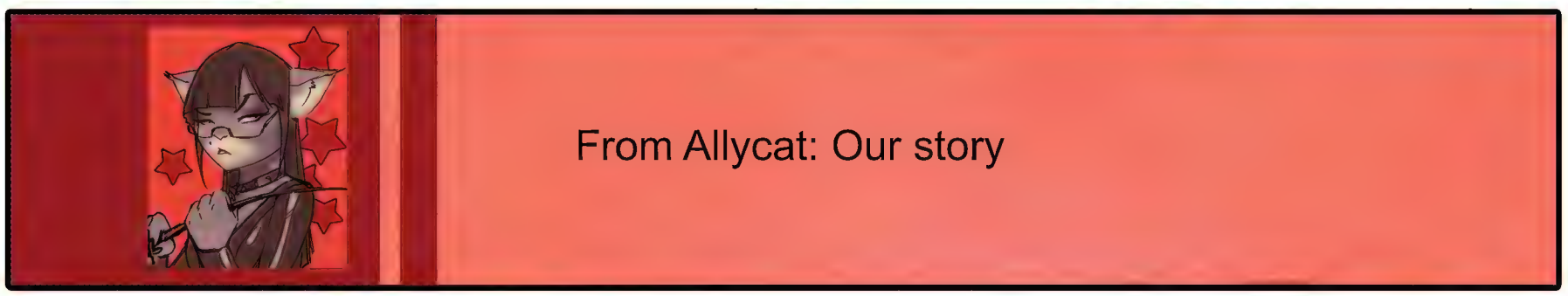
UGH...

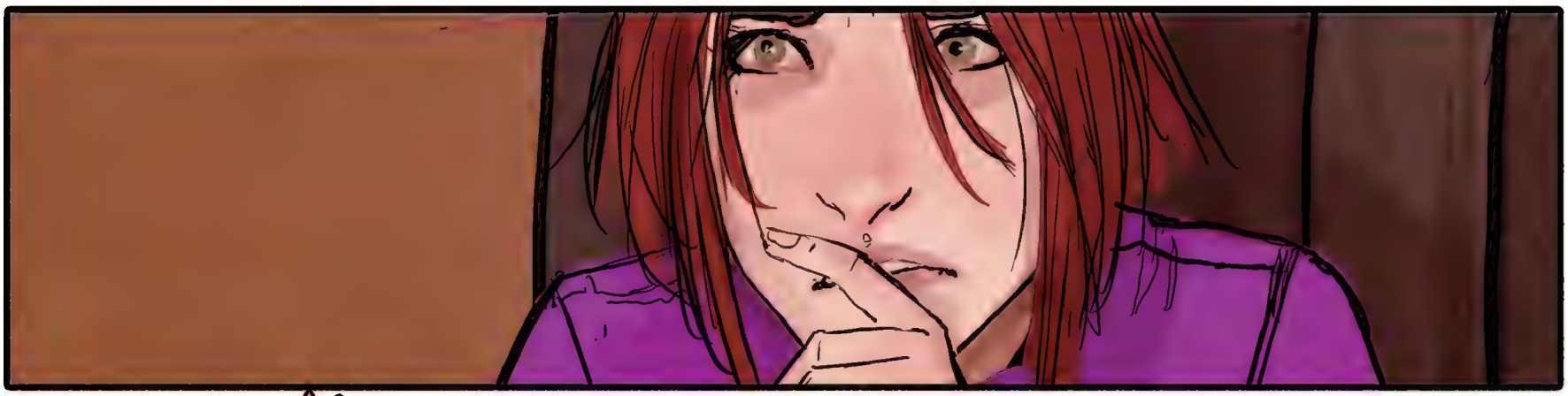
BLIP BLIP

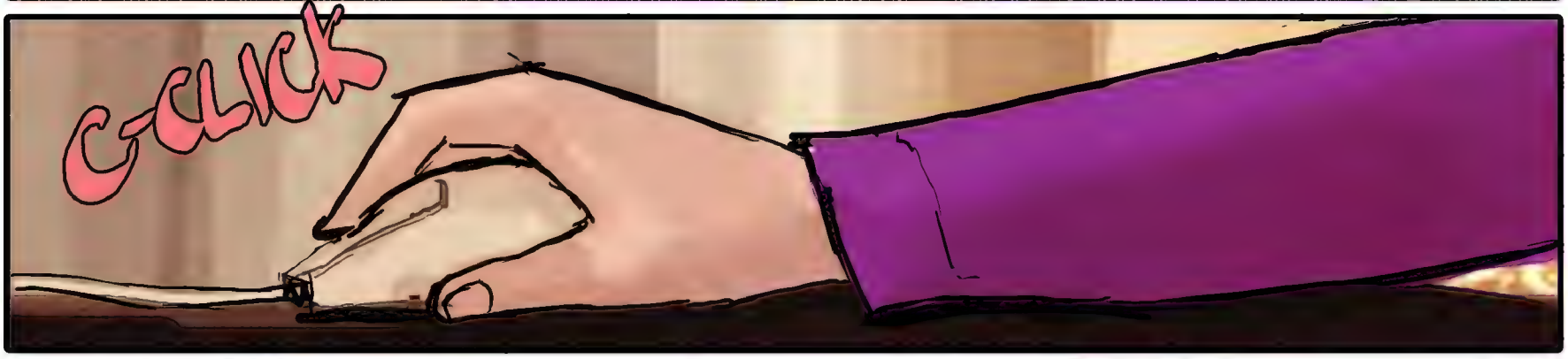
NOTE TO SELF! TURN *OFF* PRIVATE MESSAGE SOUND NOTIFICATIONS!

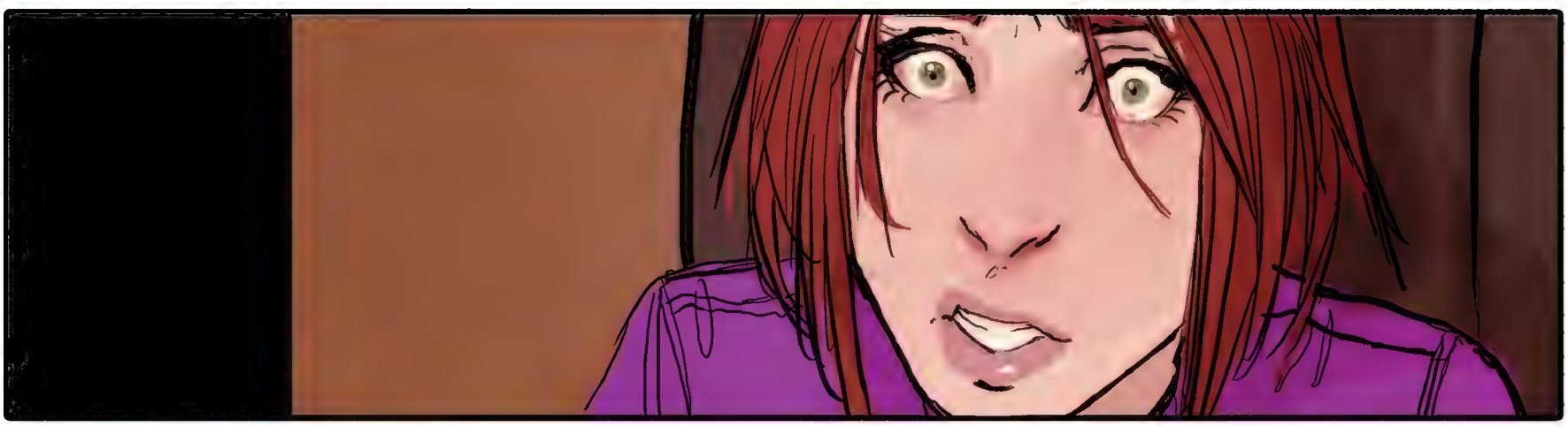
BLIP

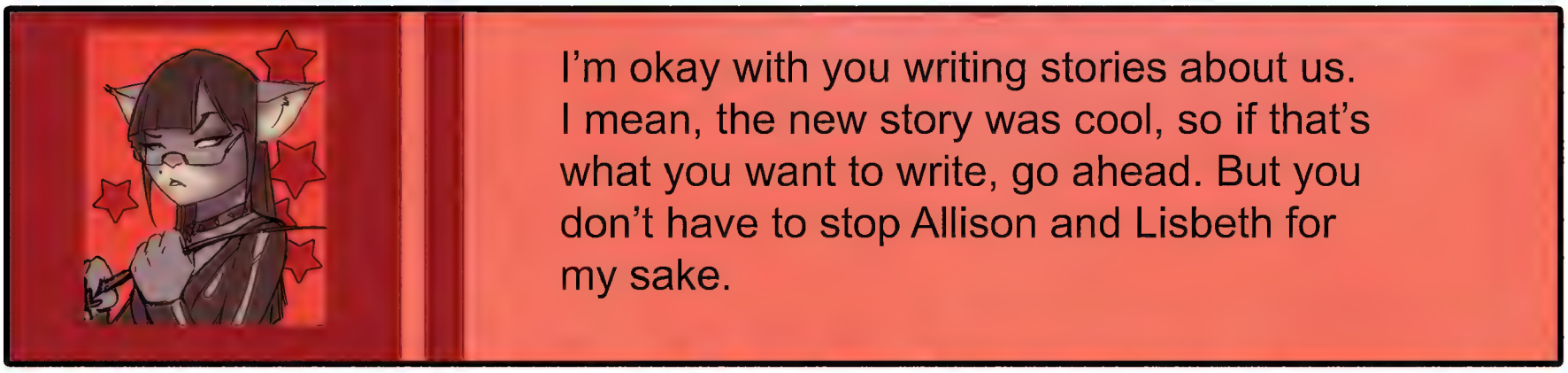


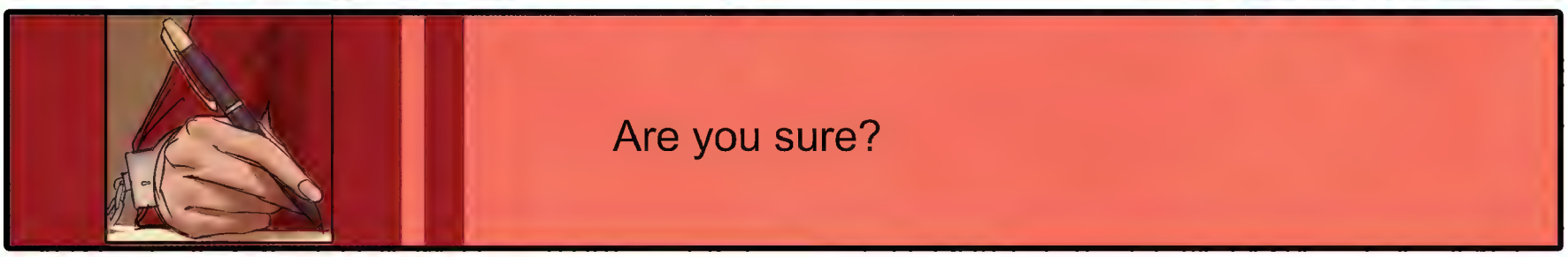





C-CLICK




I'm okay with you writing stories about us. I mean, the new story was cool, so if that's what you want to write, go ahead. But you don't have to stop Allison and Lisbeth for my sake.


Are you sure?

Yes!

NOVEMBER 20TH: I WAS SNAPPED OUT OF MY LETHARGY.

THAT DAY, I REALIZED SHE WAS *STILL* THERE.

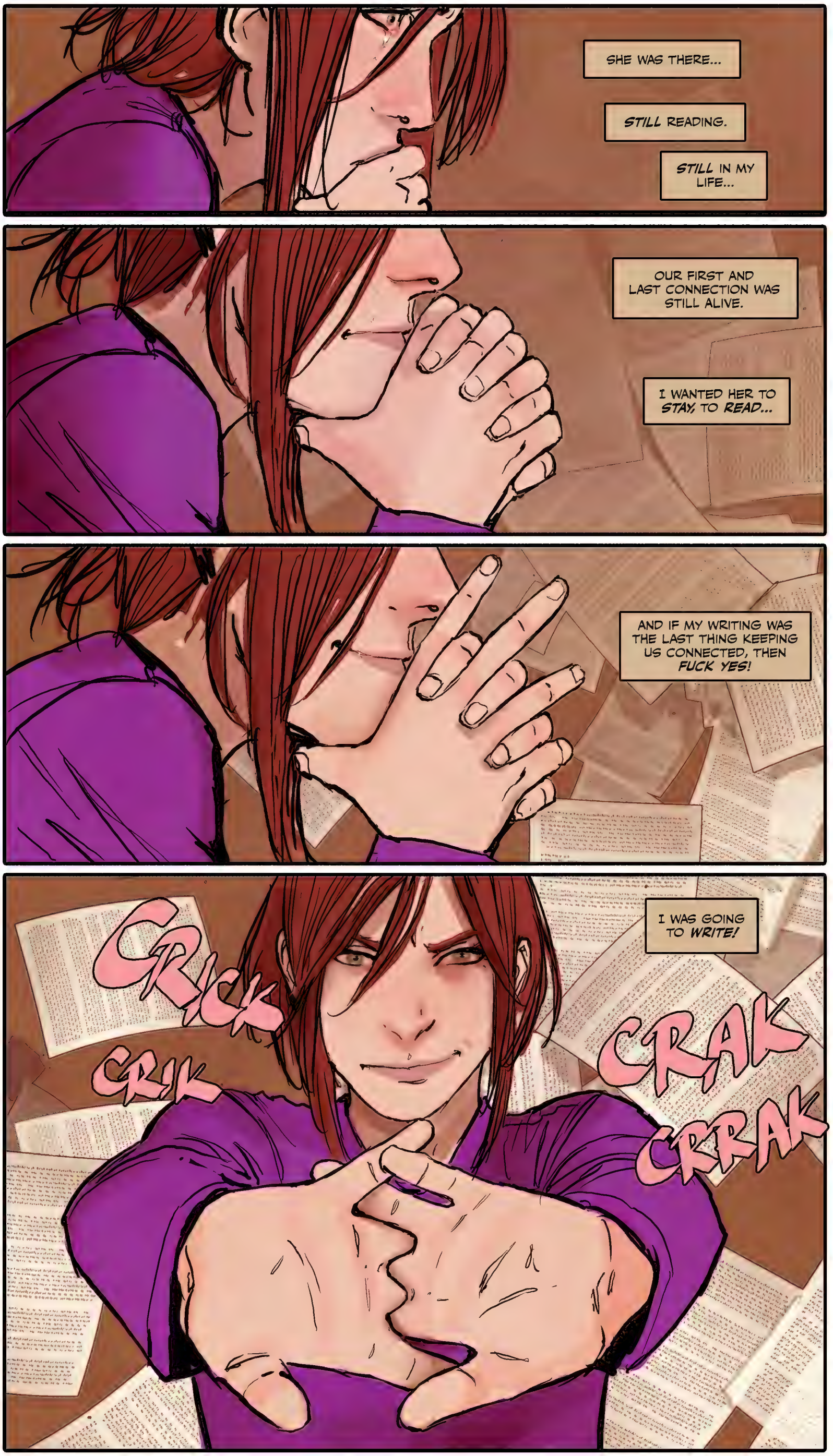
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT SCREEN...

I SAT THERE FOR HOURS JUST STARING AT IT... TRYING TO DECIDE WHAT TO MAKE OF THIS TURN OF EVENTS.

MY READERS' NOTES KEPT STOCKPILING.

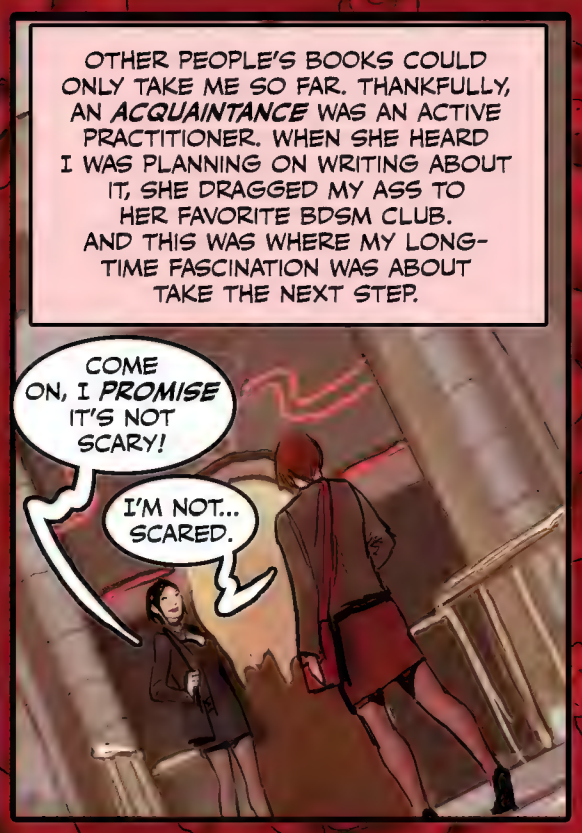
AT ANY OTHER TIME I'D BE READING THEM, *REPLYING* TO THEM...

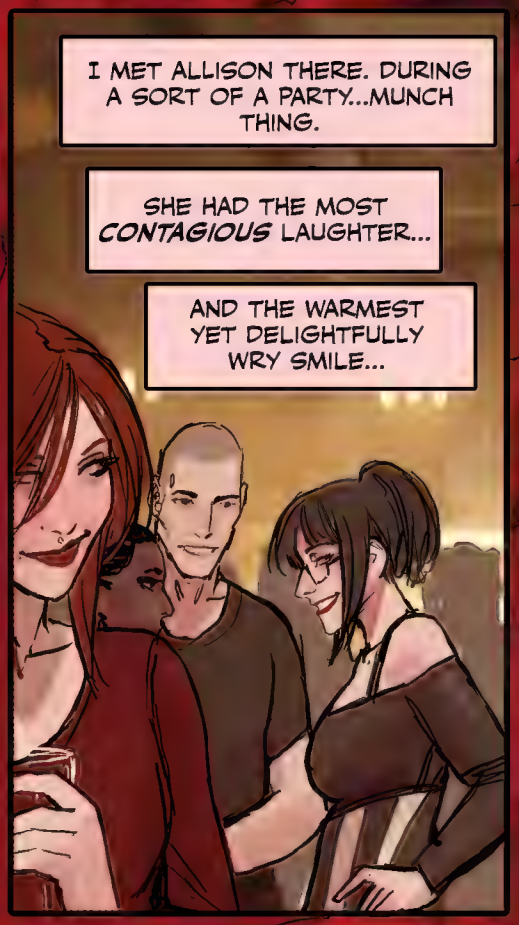
BUT THAT DAY, ALL MY THOUGHTS WERE FOCUSED ON *ONE* READER.


SHE WAS THERE...
STILL READING.
STILL IN MY LIFE...
OUR FIRST AND LAST CONNECTION WAS STILL ALIVE.
I WANTED HER TO STAY, TO READ...
AND IF MY WRITING WAS THE LAST THING KEEPING US CONNECTED, THEN FUCK YES!
I WAS GOING TO WRITE!
CRICK
CRIK
CRAK
CRRAK

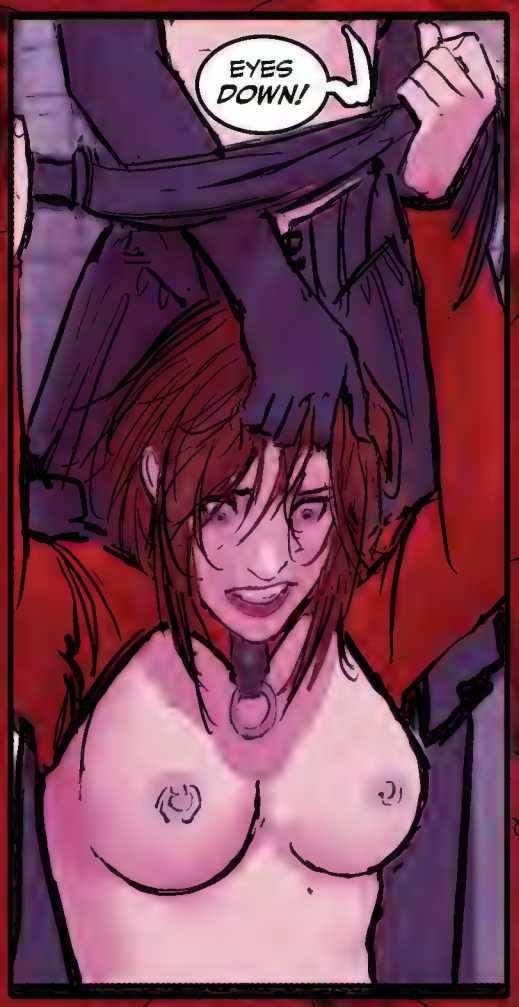
IT WAS THE MOST AMAZING ADVENTURE OF MY LIFE...

AND IT WAS JUST THAT -- AN *ADVENTURE*. IT STARTED WHEN I BEGAN RESEARCHING BDSM CULTURE FOR MY NOVEL. I WAS ALWAYS INTERESTED, BUT HAD ZERO EXPERIENCE IN THESE THINGS...
Bondage


OTHER PEOPLE'S BOOKS COULD ONLY TAKE ME SO FAR. THANKFULLY, AN *ACQUAINTANCE* WAS AN ACTIVE PRACTITIONER. WHEN SHE HEARD I WAS PLANNING ON WRITING ABOUT IT, SHE DRAGGED MY ASS TO HER FAVORITE BDSM CLUB. AND THIS WAS WHERE MY LONG-TIME FASCINATION WAS ABOUT TAKE THE NEXT STEP.
COME ON, I *PROMISE* IT'S NOT SCARY!
I'M NOT... SCARED.


I MET ALLISON THERE. DURING A SORT OF A PARTY...MUNCH THING.
SHE HAD THE MOST *CONTAGIOUS* LAUGHTER...
AND THE WARMEST YET DELIGHTFULLY WRY SMILE...

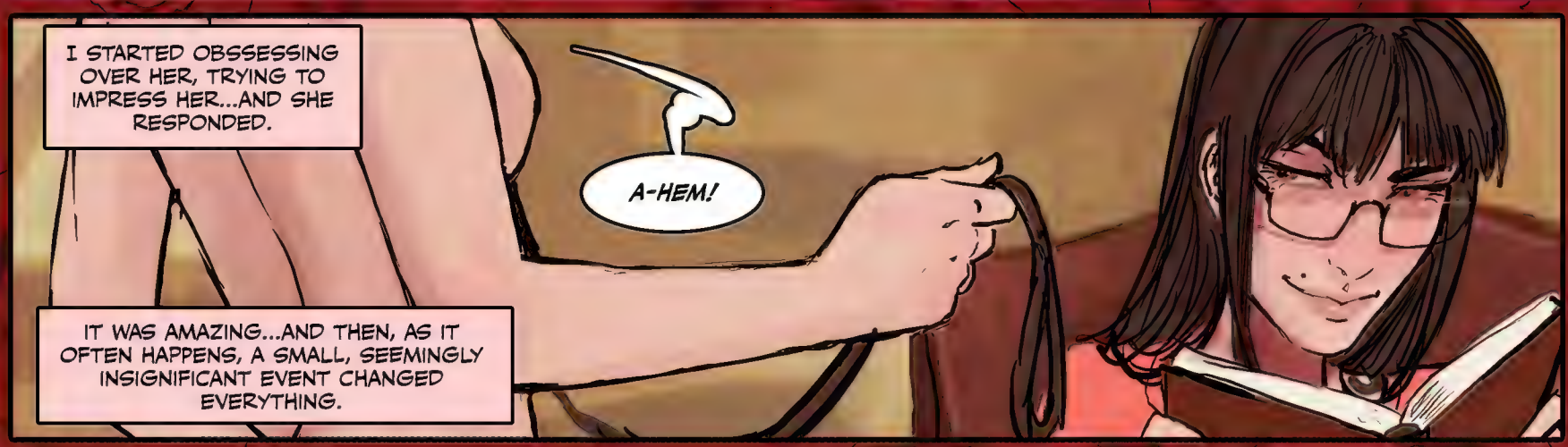
I FOUND MY SOURCE OF INFORMATION...SHE COULD TALK FOR HOURS. EXPERIENCES, ANECDOTES, THE GOOD STUFF... SHE HAD IT IN SPADES.
THE FUCK IS A *HORSETAIL BUTTPLUG?!*
I CAN *SHOW* YOU!

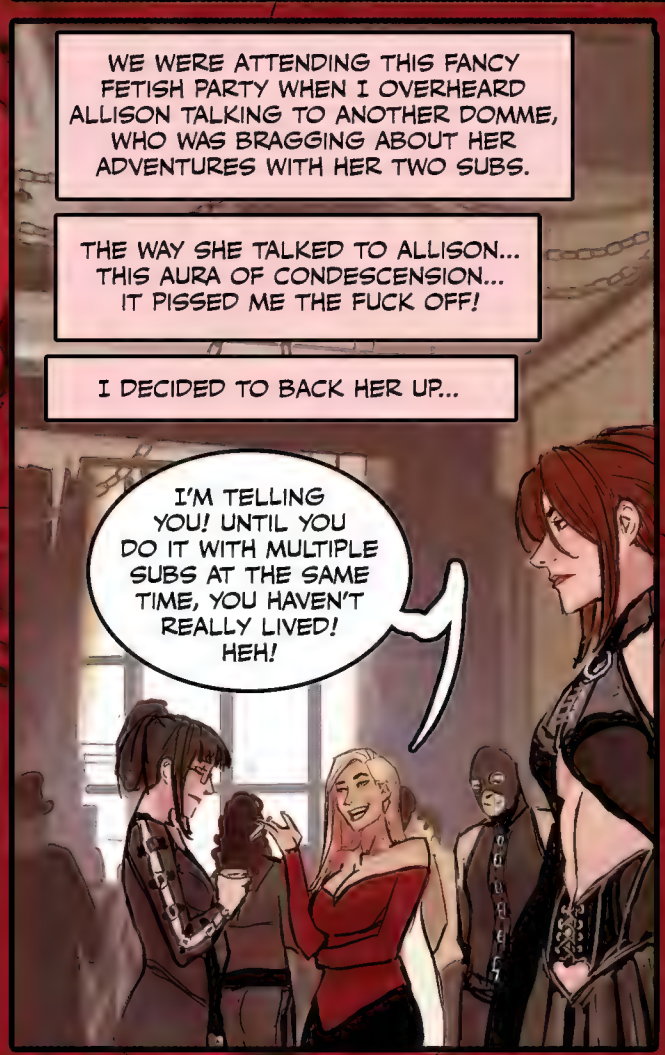

EYES *DOWN!*

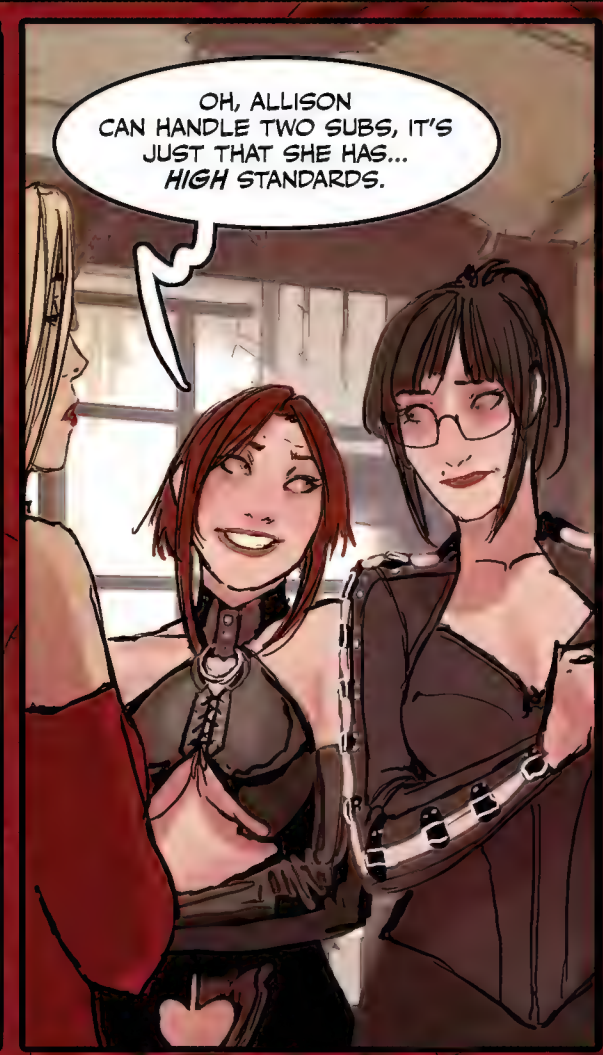
FOR THREE MONTHS, WE WOULD MEET EVERY WEEKEND. SHE WAS MY GUIDE INTO THIS WORLD. TOOK ME TO SPECIAL SHOPS, CLUBS, FUN PLACES...
AND WE CALL THIS THE "POST-APOCALYPTIC SEX GEAR," BECAUSE DAMN IT, NOT EVEN *ARMAGEDDON* STOPS THE *KINK* TRAIN!

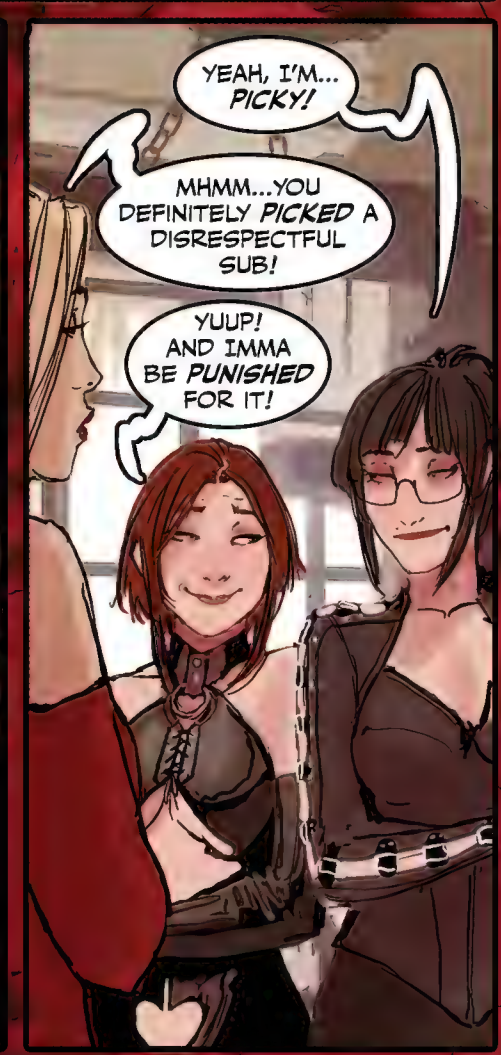
SHE...GOT UNDER MY SKIN.

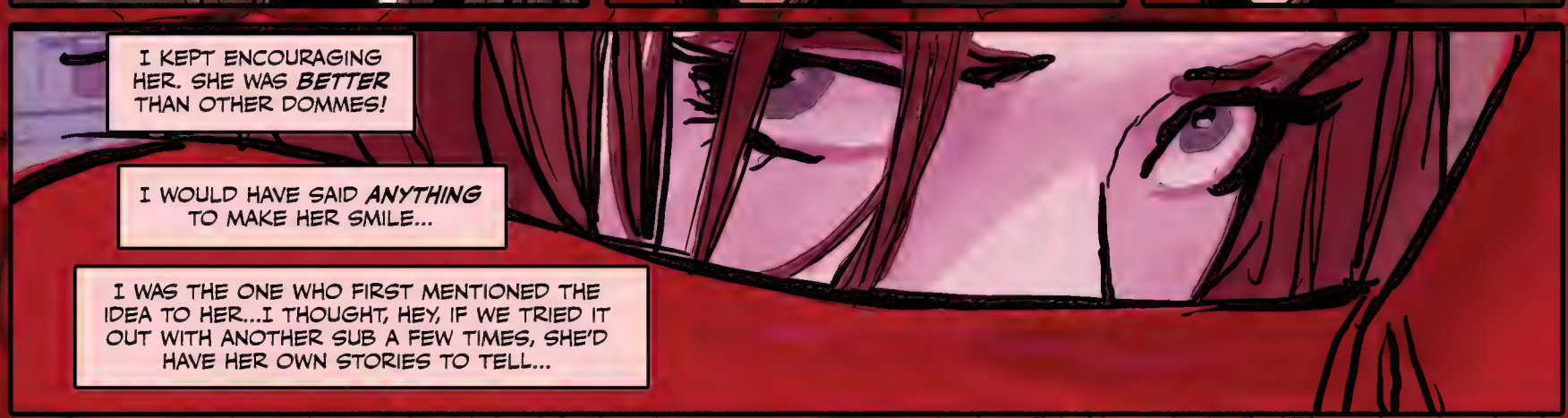
AND SOON ENOUGH, FOR RESEARCH'S SAKE...I LET HER SHOW ME FIRST-HAND WHAT IT WAS LIKE.


I STARTED OBSSESSING OVER HER, TRYING TO IMPRESS HER...AND SHE RESPONDED.
A-HEM!
IT WAS AMAZING...AND THEN, AS IT OFTEN HAPPENS, A SMALL, SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT EVENT CHANGED EVERYTHING.

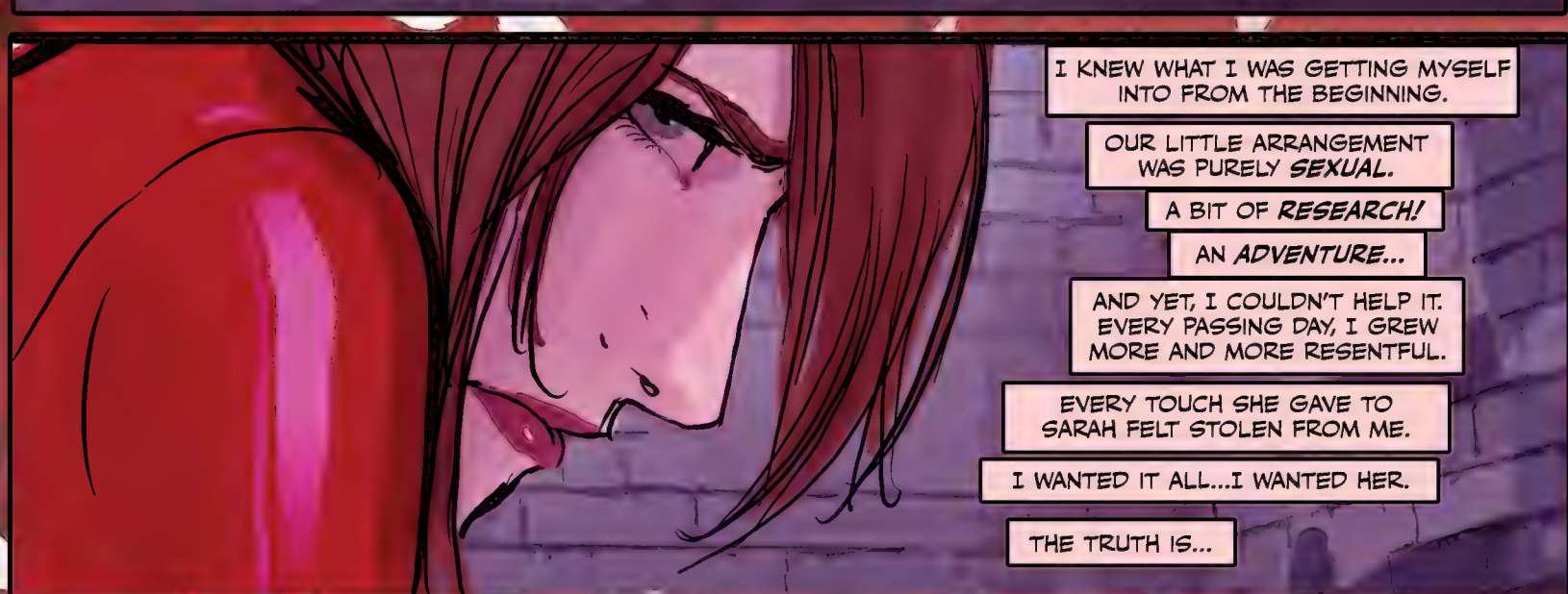

WE WERE ATTENDING THIS FANCY FETISH PARTY WHEN I OVERHEARD ALLISON TALKING TO ANOTHER DOMME, WHO WAS BRAGGING ABOUT HER ADVENTURES WITH HER TWO SUBS.
THE WAY SHE TALKED TO ALLISON... THIS AURA OF CONDESCENSION... IT PISSED ME THE FUCK OFF!
I DECIDED TO BACK HER UP...
I'M TELLING YOU! UNTIL YOU DO IT WITH MULTIPLE SUBS AT THE SAME TIME, YOU HAVEN'T REALLY LIVED! HEH!

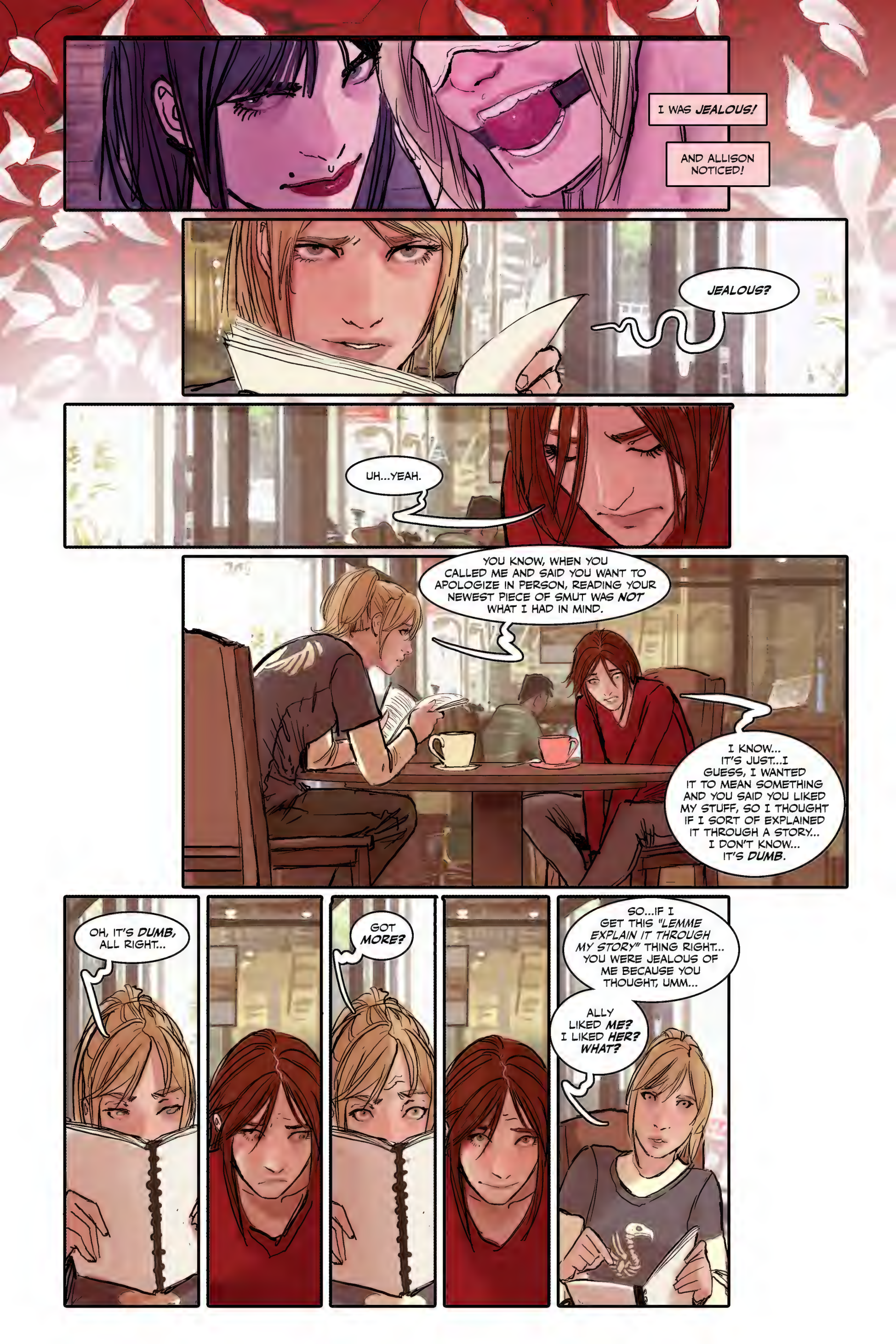

OH, ALLISON CAN HANDLE TWO SUBS, IT'S JUST THAT SHE HAS... HIGH STANDARDS.

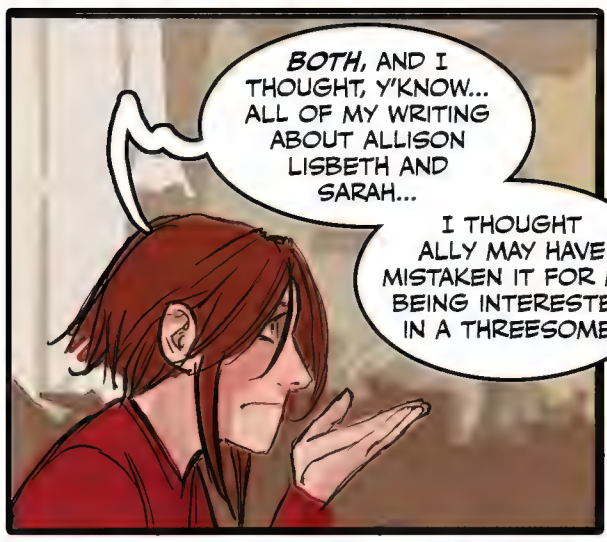

YEAH, I'M... PICKY!
MHMM...YOU DEFINITELY PICKED A DISRESPECTFUL SUB!
YUUP! AND IMMA BE PUNISHED FOR IT!

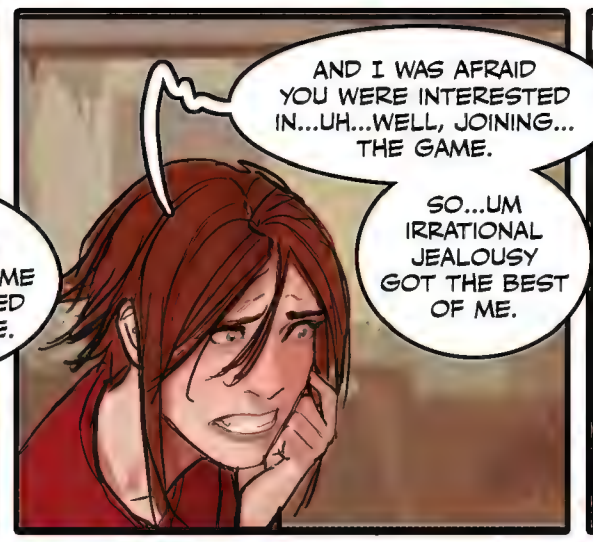

I KEPT ENCOURAGING HER. SHE WAS BETTER THAN OTHER DOMMES!
I WOULD HAVE SAID ANYTHING TO MAKE HER SMILE...
I WAS THE ONE WHO FIRST MENTIONED THE IDEA TO HER...I THOUGHT, HEY, IF WE TRIED IT OUT WITH ANOTHER SUB A FEW TIMES, SHE'D HAVE HER OWN STORIES TO TELL...

AND SO, FOUR MONTHS LATER, *ANNE* CAME INTO OUR LIVES.
ALLISON ACCEPTED HER AS A SUB. NAMED HER *SARAH.*
AND THEN, WE WERE *THREE.*

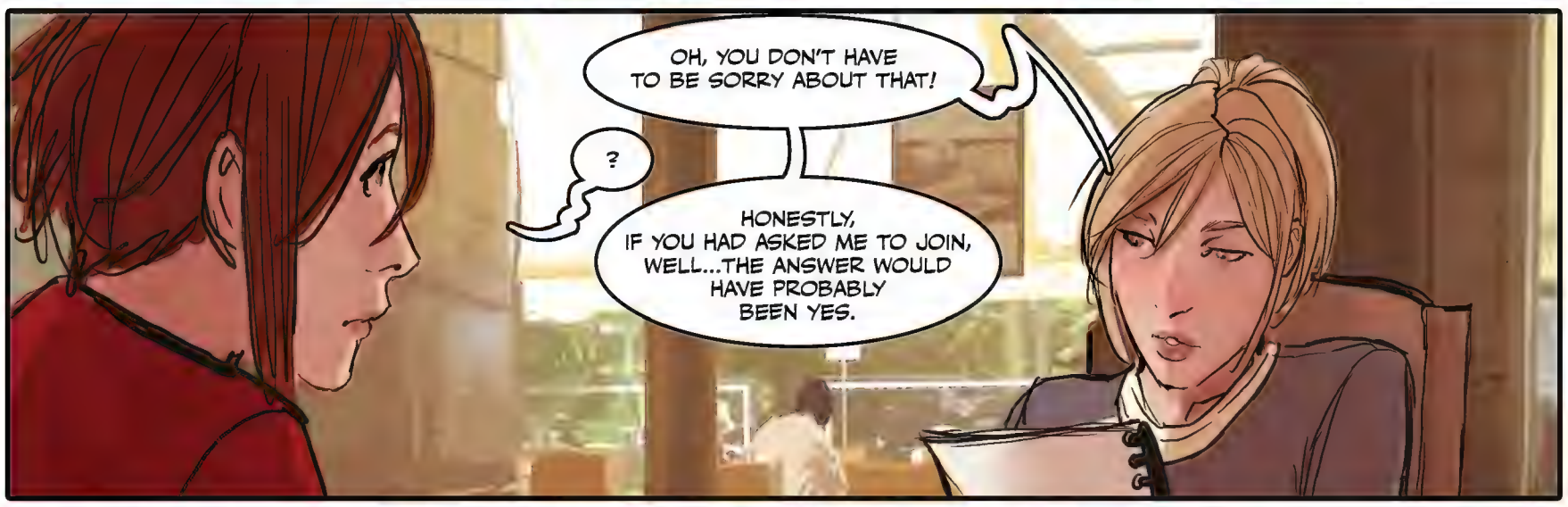

I KNEW WHAT I WAS GETTING MYSELF INTO FROM THE BEGINNING.
OUR LITTLE ARRANGEMENT WAS PURELY *SEXUAL.*
A BIT OF *RESEARCH!*
AN *ADVENTURE...*
AND YET, I COULDN'T HELP IT. EVERY PASSING DAY, I GREW MORE AND MORE RESENTFUL.
EVERY TOUCH SHE GAVE TO SARAH FELT STOLEN FROM ME.
I WANTED IT ALL...I WANTED HER.
THE TRUTH IS...


I WAS JEALOUS!
AND ALLISON NOTICED!
JEALOUS?
UH...YEAH.
YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU CALLED ME AND SAID YOU WANT TO APOLOGIZE IN PERSON, READING YOUR NEWEST PIECE OF SMUT WAS NOT WHAT I HAD IN MIND.
I KNOW... IT'S JUST...I GUESS, I WANTED IT TO MEAN SOMETHING AND YOU SAID YOU LIKED MY STUFF, SO I THOUGHT IF I SORT OF EXPLAINED IT THROUGH A STORY... I DON'T KNOW... IT'S DUMB.
OH, IT'S DUMB, ALL RIGHT...
GOT MORE?
SO...IF I GET THIS "LEMME EXPLAIN IT THROUGH MY STORY" THING RIGHT... YOU WERE JEALOUS OF ME BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT, UMM...
ALLY LIKED ME? I LIKED HER? WHAT?

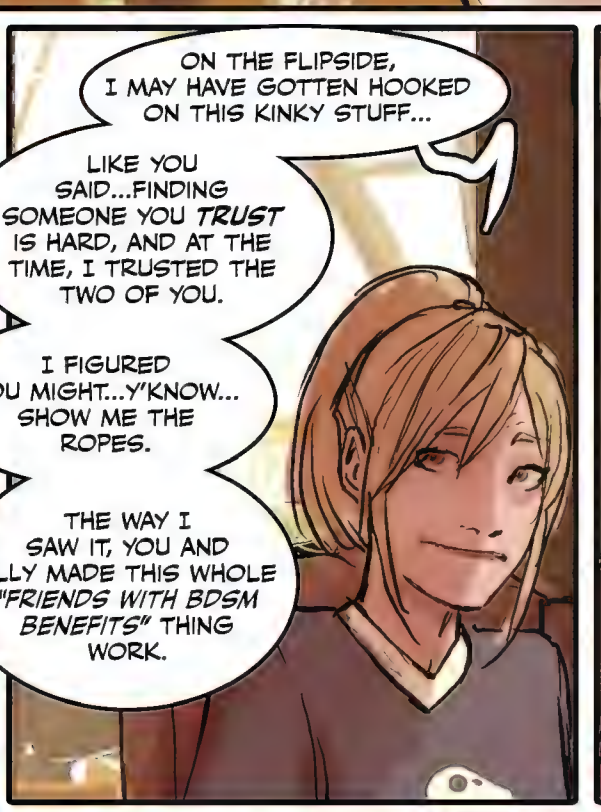

BOTH, AND I THOUGHT, Y'KNOW... ALL OF MY WRITING ABOUT ALLISON LISBETH AND SARAH...
I THOUGHT ALLY MAY HAVE MISTAKEN IT FOR ME BEING INTERESTED IN A THREESOME.


AND I WAS AFRAID YOU WERE INTERESTED IN...UH...WELL, JOINING... THE GAME.
SO...UM IRRATIONAL JEALOUSY GOT THE BEST OF ME.

I...I'M SORRY!


OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SORRY ABOUT THAT!
?
HONESTLY, IF YOU HAD ASKED ME TO JOIN, WELL...THE ANSWER WOULD HAVE PROBABLY BEEN YES.

OH?
I MEAN, DON'T GET ME WRONG...I CONSIDER YOU BOTH TO BE MY FRIENDS.

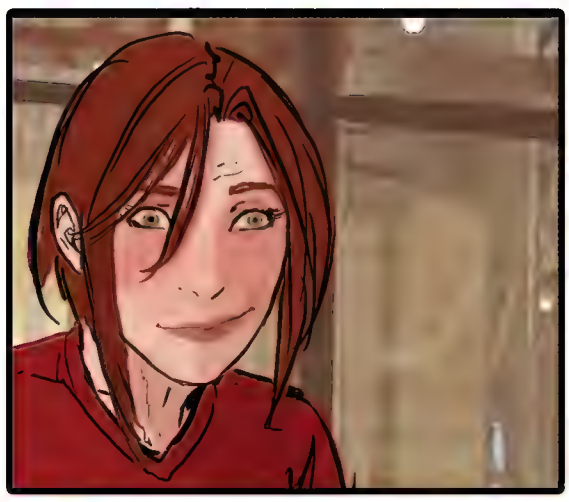

ON THE FLIPSIDE, I MAY HAVE GOTTEN HOOKED ON THIS KINKY STUFF...
LIKE YOU SAID...FINDING SOMEONE YOU TRUST IS HARD, AND AT THE TIME, I TRUSTED THE TWO OF YOU.
I FIGURED YOU MIGHT...Y'KNOW... SHOW ME THE ROPES.
THE WAY I SAW IT, YOU AND ALLY MADE THIS WHOLE "FRIENDS WITH BDSM BENEFITS" THING WORK.

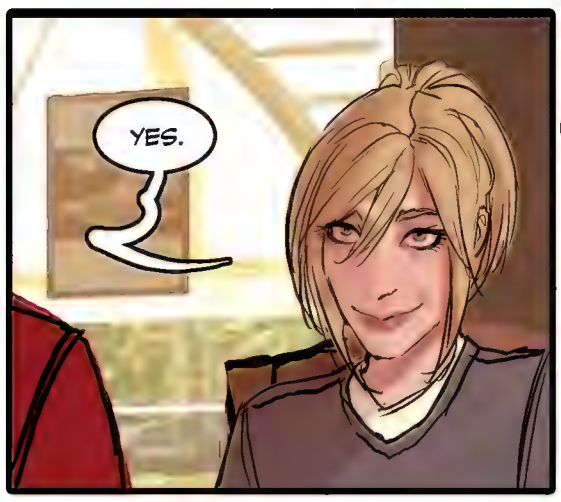
WELL, THAT CRASHED AND BURNED.

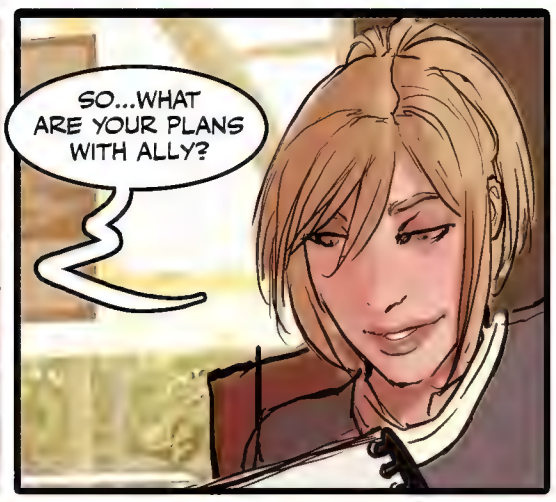
UHH...YEAH...

SOOO... CAN YOU FORGIVE ME? YOU KNOW...FOR NOT CALLING YOU, NOT APOLOGIZING, FOR ACTING LIKE..

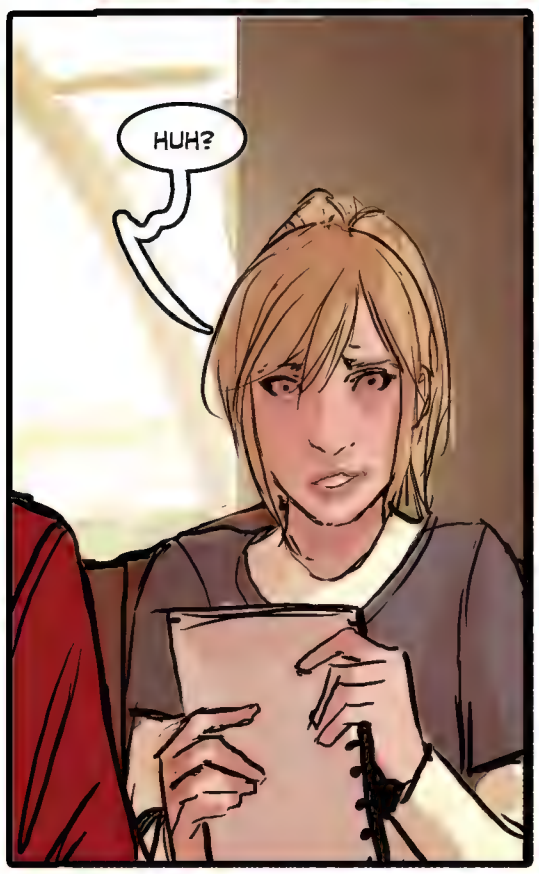
THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SELF-CENTERED BABY?

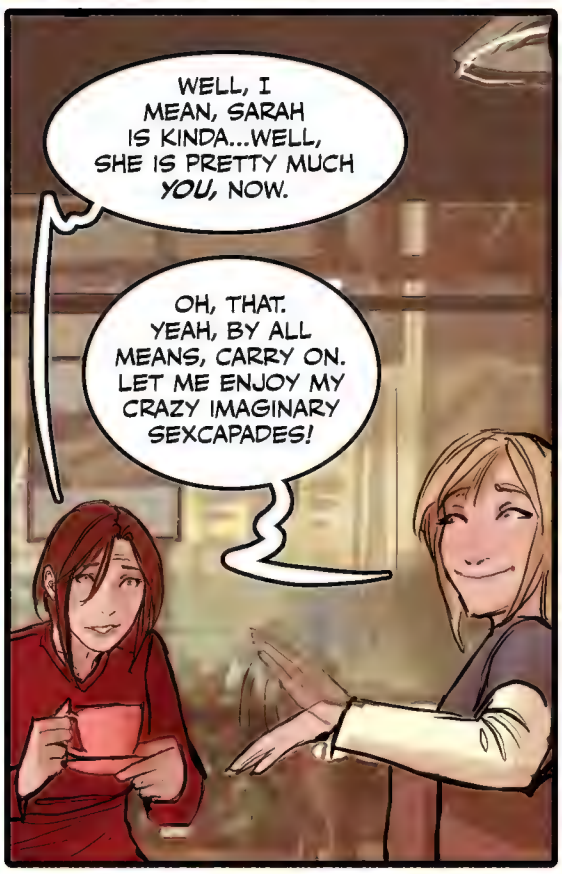


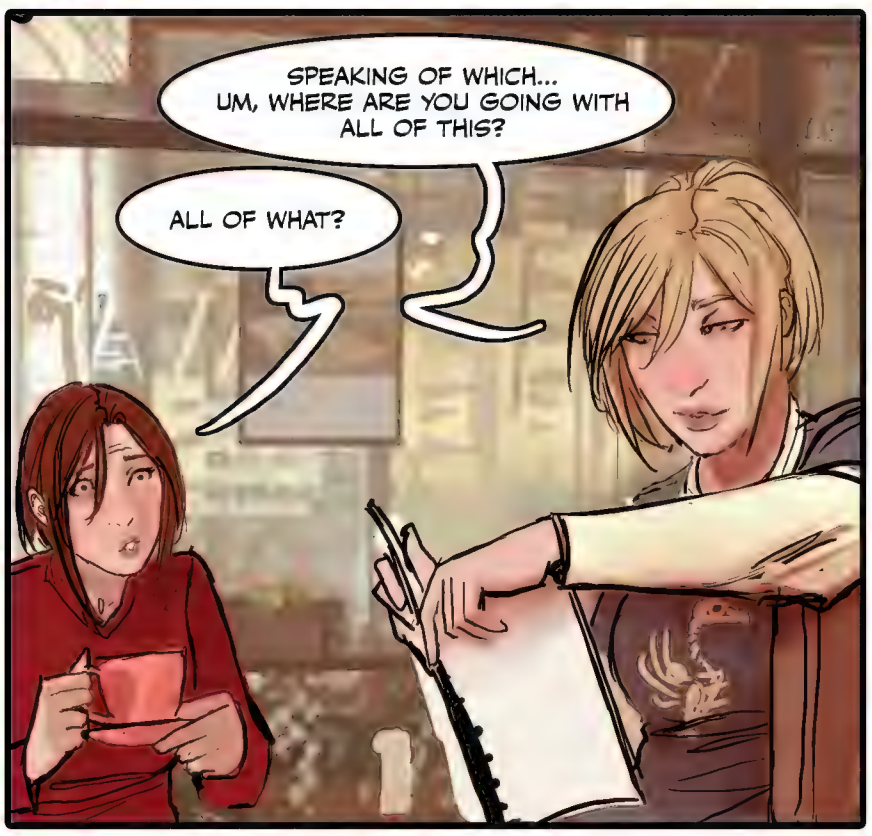

YES.


SO...WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS WITH ALLY?

PLANS?
WELL...ISN'T THIS BASED ON HER? I MEAN IS SHE OKAY WITH --
OH, THAT? SHE SAID SHE'S FINE WITH ME WRITING IT...WHICH BRINGS ME TO SOMETHING ELSE I HAD TO ASK YOU! ARE *YOU* OKAY WITH IT??

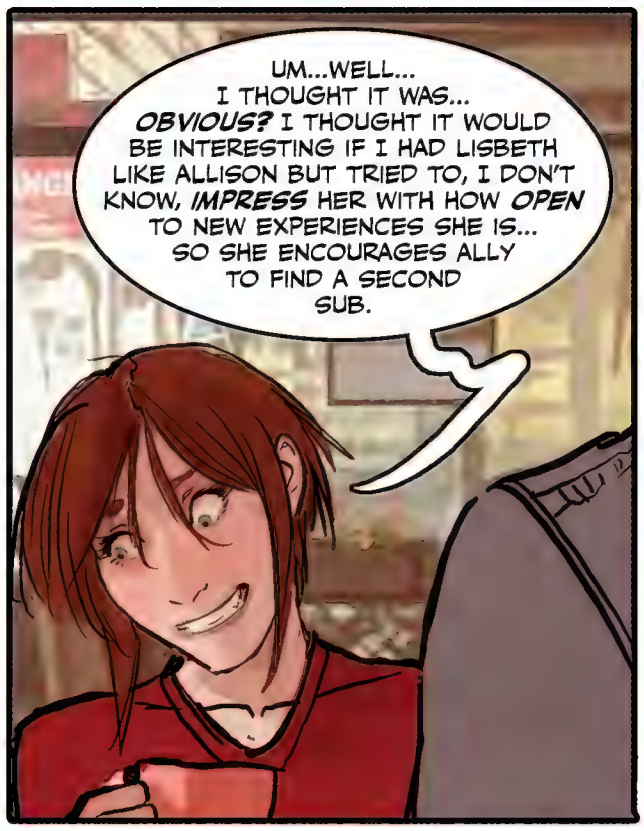

HUH?

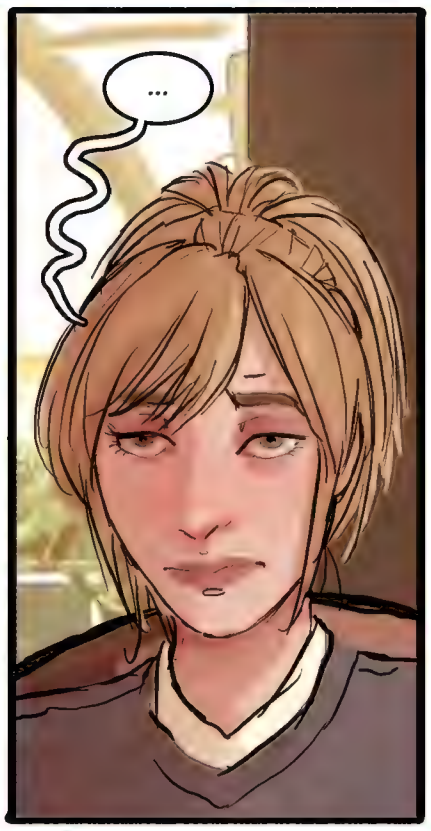

WELL, I MEAN, SARAH IS KINDA...WELL, SHE IS PRETTY MUCH *YOU,* NOW.
OH, THAT. YEAH, BY ALL MEANS, CARRY ON. LET ME ENJOY MY CRAZY IMAGINARY SEXCAPADES!


SPEAKING OF WHICH... UM, WHERE ARE YOU GOING WITH ALL OF THIS?
ALL OF WHAT?

WELL, IN YOUR STORY IT WAS INITIALLY IMPLIED THAT *SARAH* IS FALLING FOR *LISBETH,* AND NOW IT SEEMS THAT *LISBETH* HAS ACTUALLY FALLEN FOR *ALLI...*

FOOF
FOOF


UM...WELL... I THOUGHT IT WAS... *OBVIOUS?* I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING IF I HAD LISBETH LIKE ALLISON BUT TRIED TO, I DON'T KNOW, *IMPRESS* HER WITH HOW *OPEN* TO NEW EXPERIENCES SHE IS... SO SHE ENCOURAGES ALLY TO FIND A SECOND SUB.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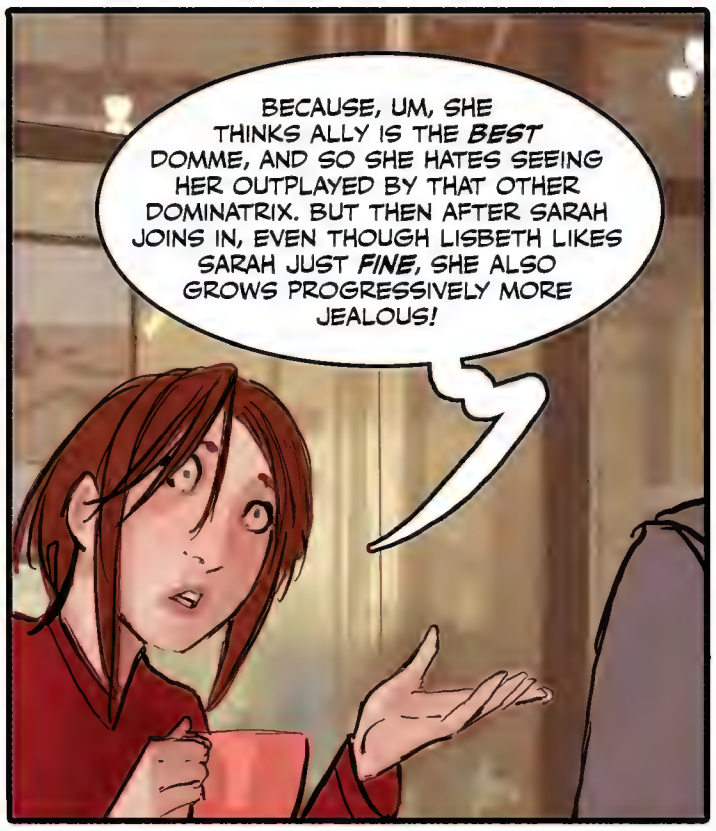
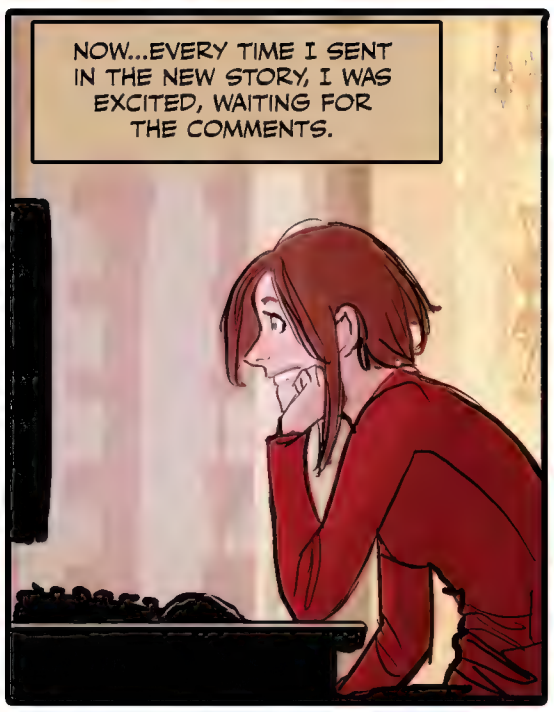
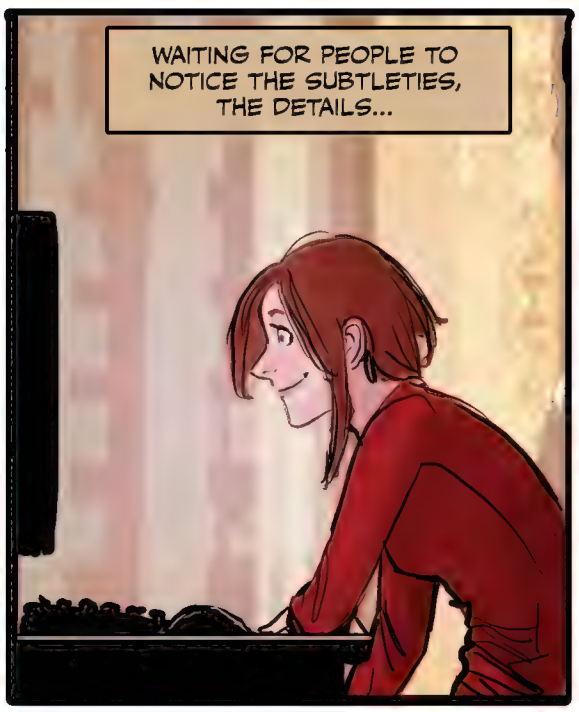

BECAUSE, UM, SHE THINKS ALLY IS THE *BEST* DOMME, AND SO SHE HATES SEEING HER OUTPLAYED BY THAT OTHER DOMINATRIX. BUT THEN AFTER SARAH JOINS IN, EVEN THOUGH LISBETH LIKES SARAH JUST *FINE*, SHE ALSO GROWS PROGRESSIVELY MORE JEALOUS!

RIGHT...

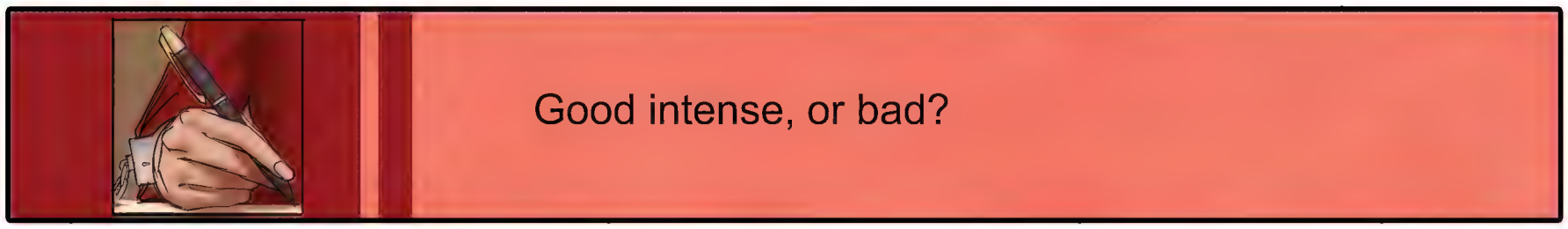
I'M *GOING* SOMEWHERE WITH THIS!

I POSTED THE STORY ONLINE THAT EVENING.



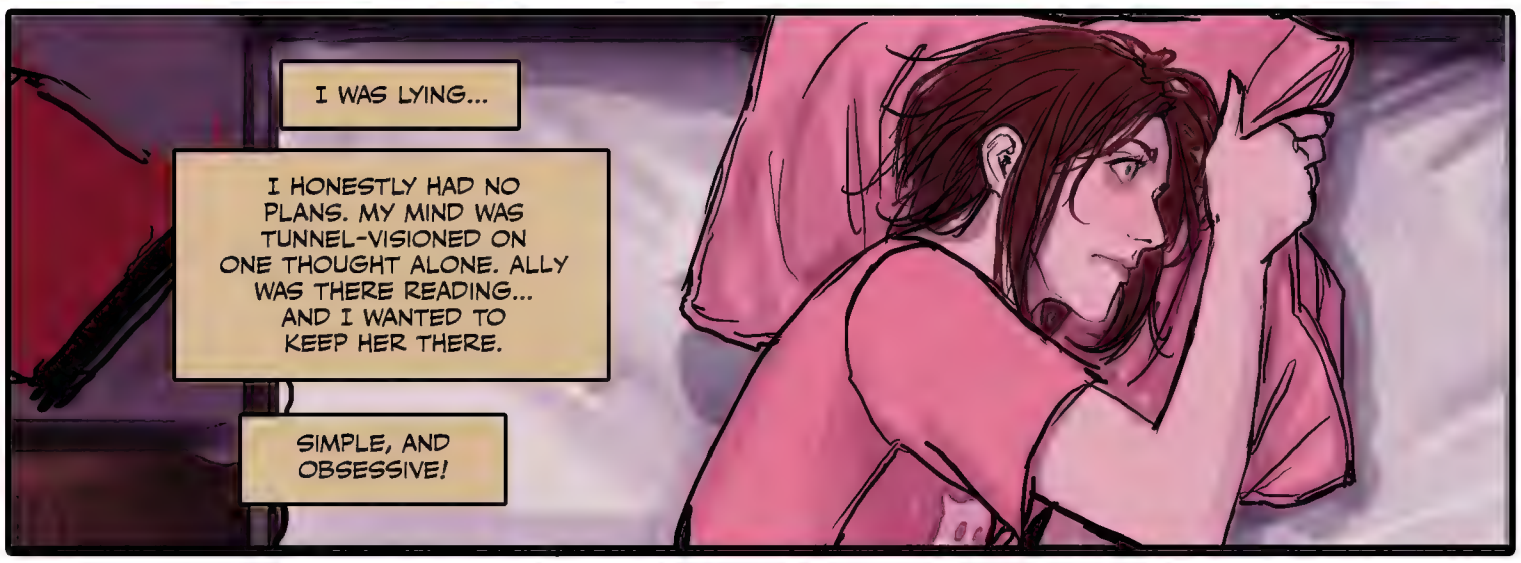


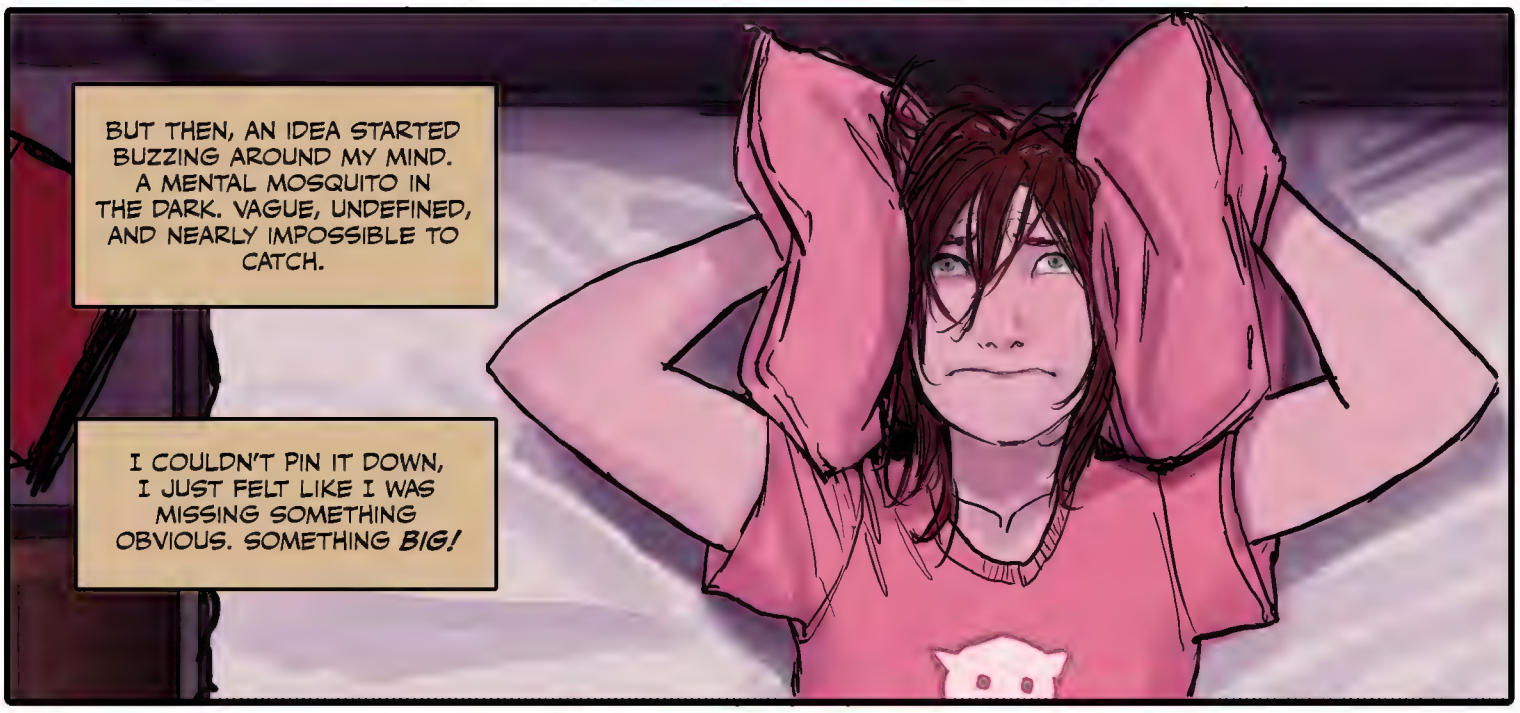
THAT DAY, I WAS WAITING FOR HER TO READ IT.



MUCH HAS CHANGED IN THESE LAST TWO WEEKS,
BUT SOME THINGS REMAINED THE SAME.
ALLY WAS STILL THERE, STILL READING MY STORIES.
OH...

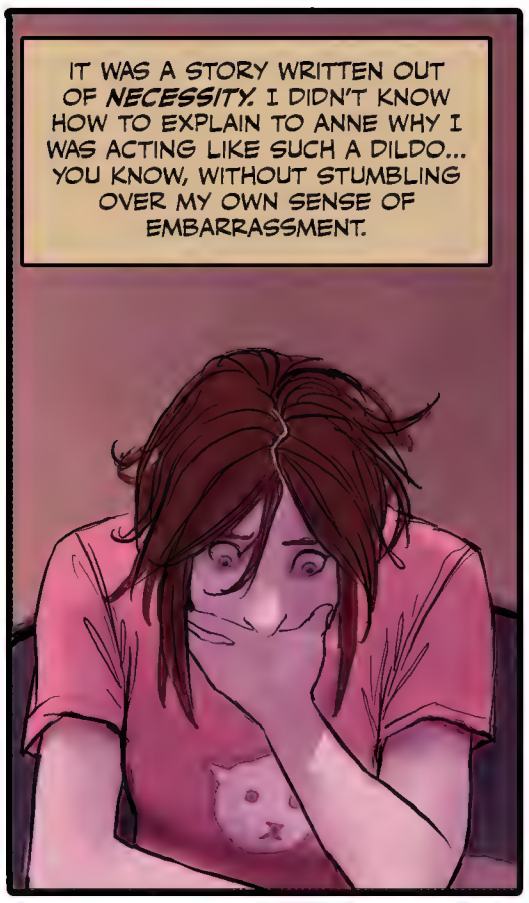
I'M GOING SOMEWHERE WITH THIS!

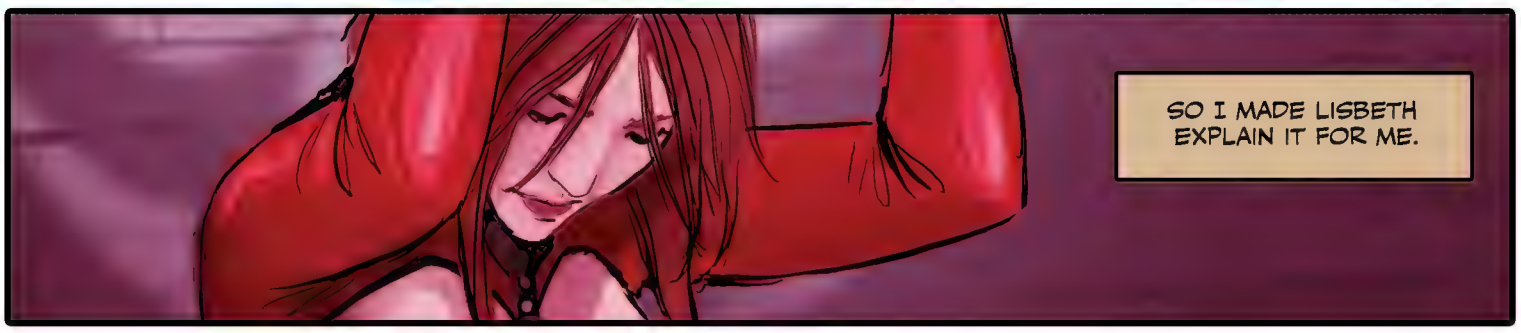

I WAS LYING...
I HONESTLY HAD NO PLANS. MY MIND WAS TUNNEL-VISIONED ON ONE THOUGHT ALONE. ALLY WAS THERE READING... AND I WANTED TO KEEP HER THERE.
SIMPLE, AND OBSESSIVE!

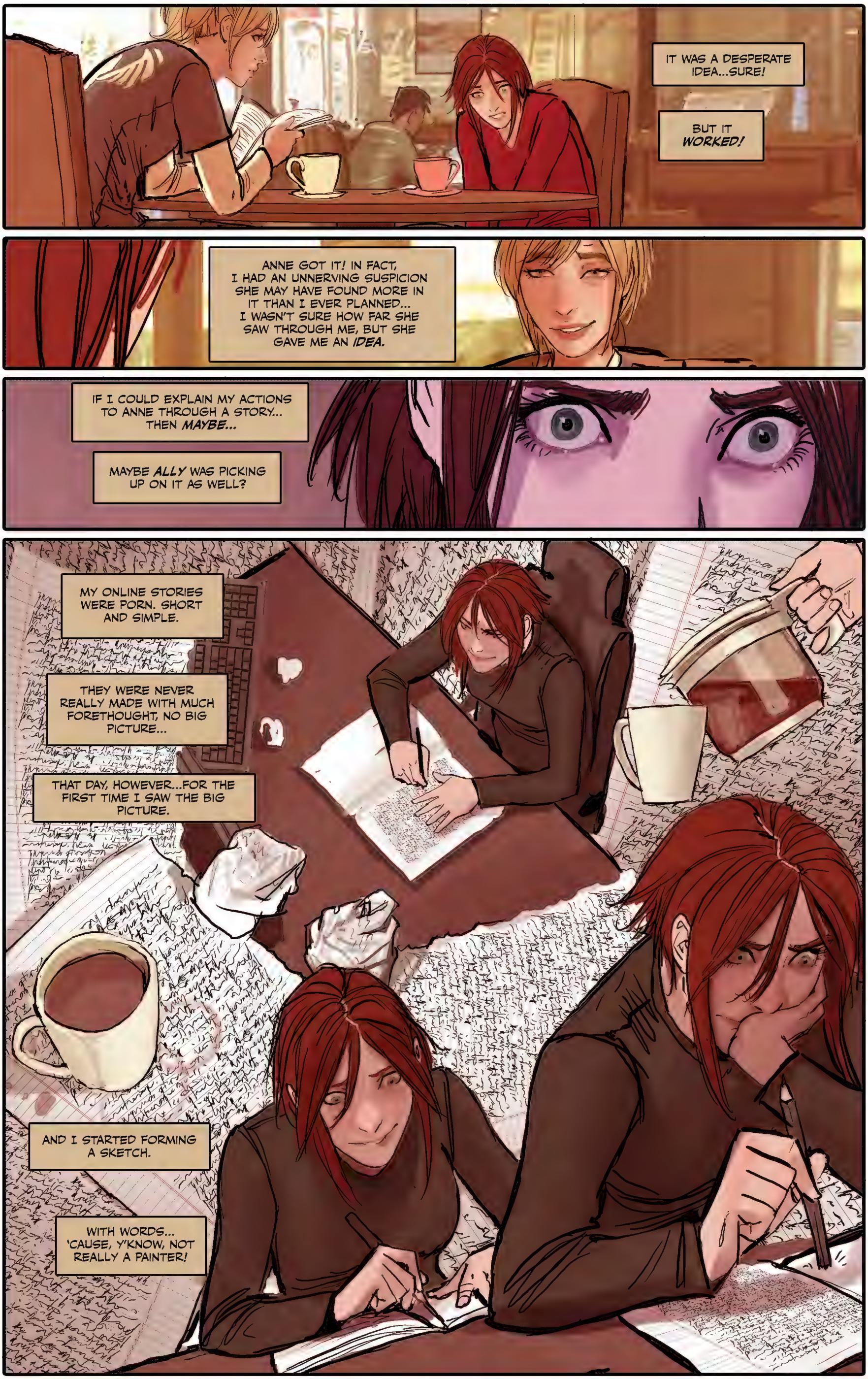

BUT THEN, AN IDEA STARTED BUZZING AROUND MY MIND. A MENTAL MOSQUITO IN THE DARK. VAGUE, UNDEFINED, AND NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO CATCH.
I COULDN'T PIN IT DOWN, I JUST FELT LIKE I WAS MISSING SOMETHING OBVIOUS. SOMETHING *BIG!*

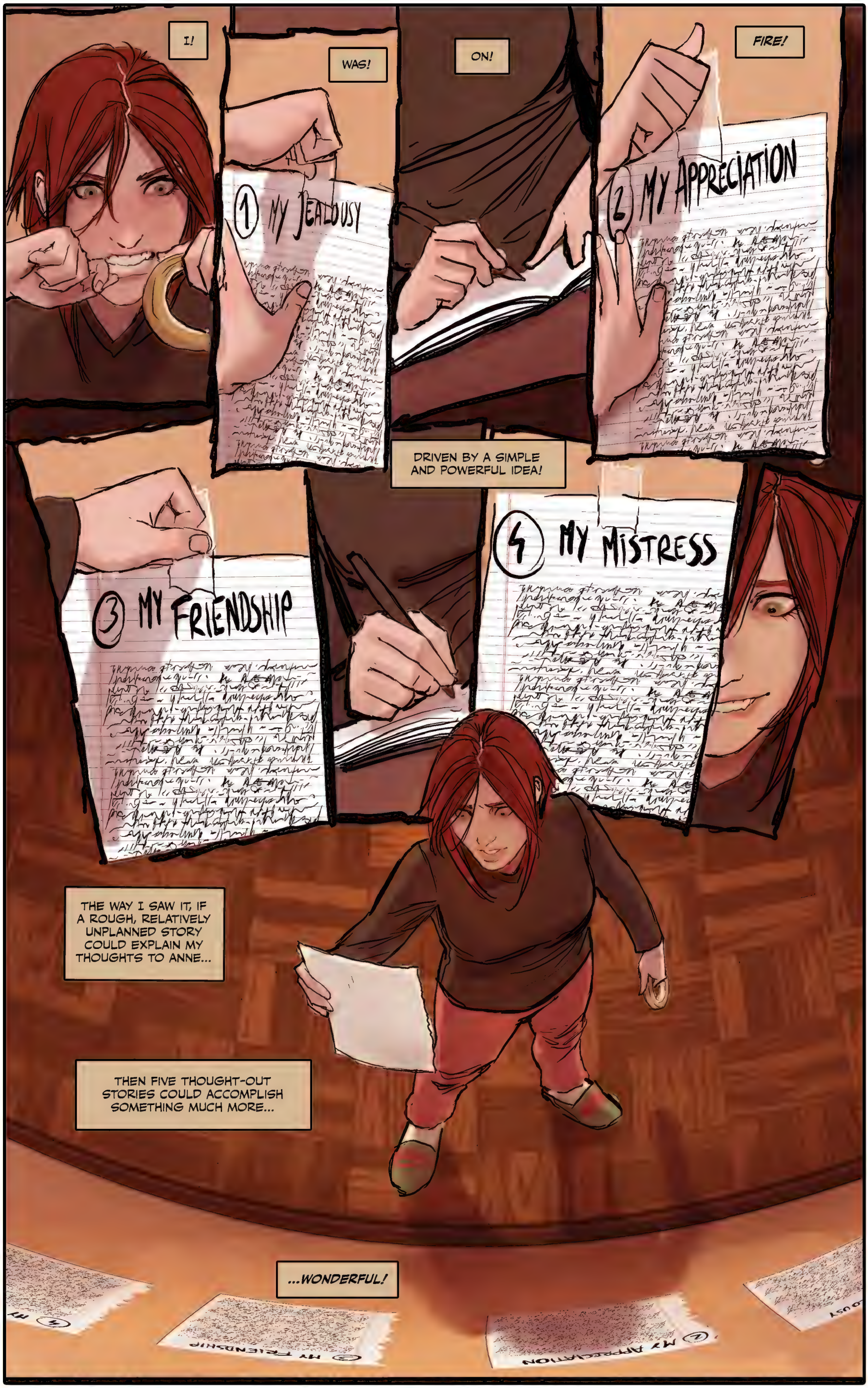
AND THEN, I FINALLY HAD IT!

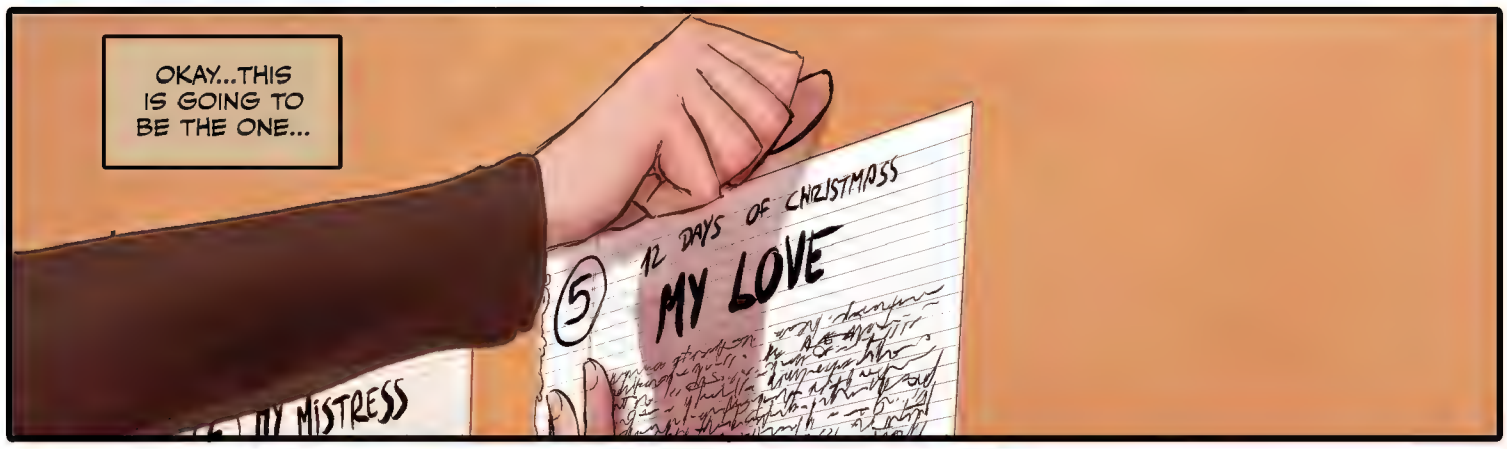
I HAD JUST WRITTEN A STORY WITH A DEEPER PURPOSE. AN *INTENTIONAL* METAPHOR.

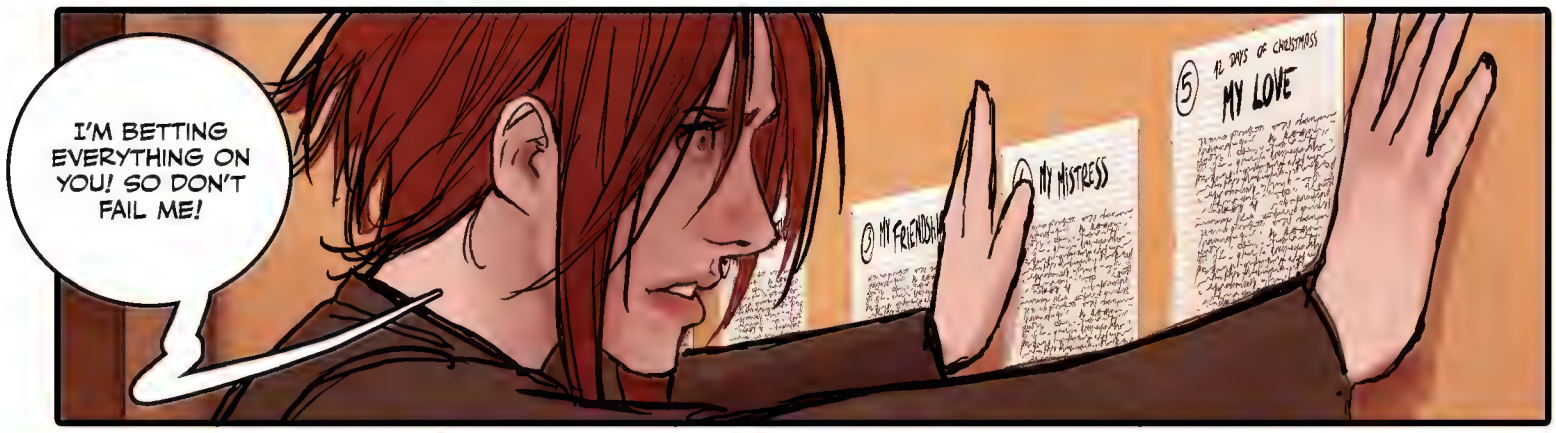

IT WAS A STORY WRITTEN OUT OF *NECESSITY.* I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN TO ANNE WHY I WAS ACTING LIKE SUCH A DILDO... YOU KNOW, WITHOUT STUMBLING OVER MY OWN SENSE OF EMBARRASSMENT.


SO I MADE LISBETH EXPLAIN IT FOR ME.

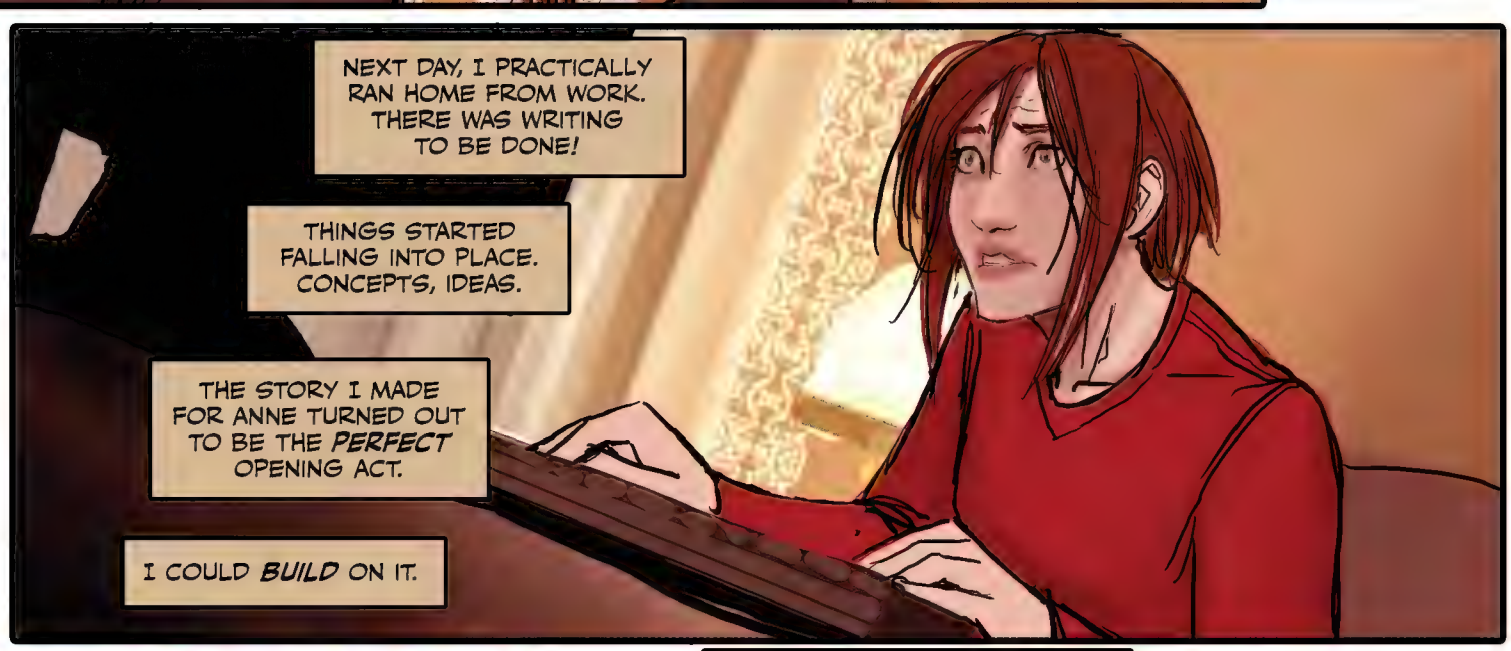

IT WAS A DESPERATE IDEA...SURE!
BUT IT *WORKED!*
ANNE GOT IT! IN FACT, I HAD AN UNNERVING SUSPICION SHE MAY HAVE FOUND MORE IN IT THAN I EVER PLANNED... I WASN'T SURE HOW FAR SHE SAW THROUGH ME, BUT SHE GAVE ME AN *IDEA.*
IF I COULD EXPLAIN MY ACTIONS TO ANNE THROUGH A STORY... THEN *MAYBE...*
MAYBE *ALLY* WAS PICKING UP ON IT AS WELL?
MY ONLINE STORIES WERE PORN. SHORT AND SIMPLE.
THEY WERE NEVER REALLY MADE WITH MUCH FORETHOUGHT, NO BIG PICTURE...
THAT DAY, HOWEVER...FOR THE FIRST TIME I SAW THE BIG PICTURE.
AND I STARTED FORMING A SKETCH.
WITH WORDS... 'CAUSE, Y'KNOW, NOT REALLY A PAINTER!


I!
WAS!
ON!
FIRE!
1 MY JEALOUSY
2 MY APPRECIATION
DRIVEN BY A SIMPLE AND POWERFUL IDEA!
3 MY FRIENDSHIP
4 MY MISTRESS
THE WAY I SAW IT, IF A ROUGH, RELATIVELY UNPLANNED STORY COULD EXPLAIN MY THOUGHTS TO ANNE...
THEN FIVE THOUGHT-OUT STORIES COULD ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING MUCH MORE...
...WONDERFUL!

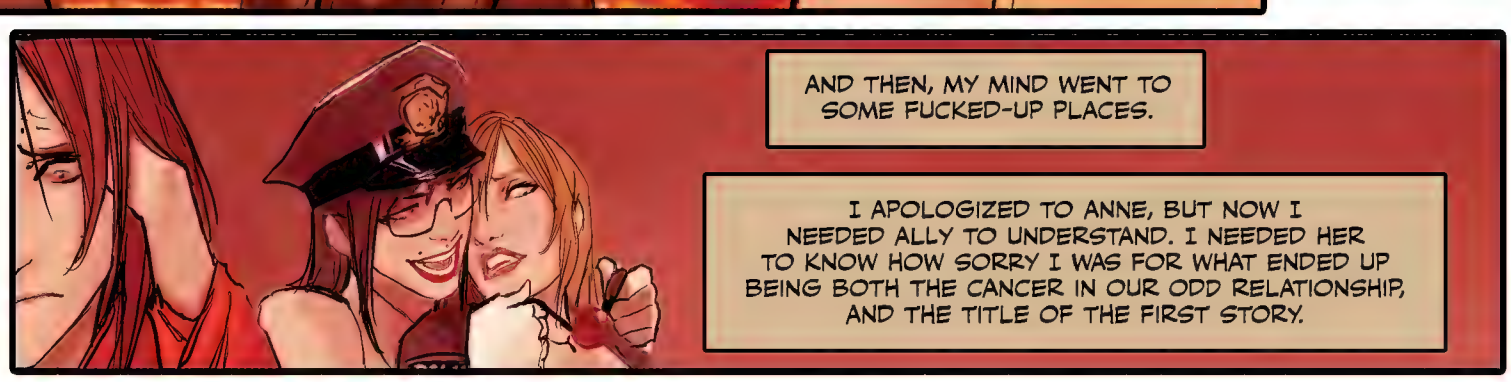

OKAY...THIS IS GOING TO BE THE ONE...
12 DAYS OF CHRISTMASS
MY LOVE
MY MISTRESS


I'M BETTING EVERYTHING ON YOU! SO DON'T FAIL ME!
12 DAYS OF CHRISTMASS
MY LOVE
MY MISTRESS

PLEASE!


NEXT DAY, I PRACTICALLY RAN HOME FROM WORK. THERE WAS WRITING TO BE DONE!
THINGS STARTED FALLING INTO PLACE. CONCEPTS, IDEAS.
THE STORY I MADE FOR ANNE TURNED OUT TO BE THE *PERFECT* OPENING ACT.
I COULD *BUILD* ON IT.

HINDSIGHT IS 20/20 IF YOU ARE WILLING TO FACE YOUR OWN FUCKUPS. AND I HAD TO DO JUST THAT.
I BROUGHT ANNE INTO OUR LIVES. I BEFRIENDED HER. WROTE HER INTO OUR STORY, INTRODUCED HER TO ALLY, AND THEN THROUGH MY OWN INSECURITY, GREW JEALOUS OF HER...


AND THEN, MY MIND WENT TO SOME FUCKED-UP PLACES.
I APOLOGIZED TO ANNE, BUT NOW I NEEDED ALLY TO UNDERSTAND. I NEEDED HER TO KNOW HOW SORRY I WAS FOR WHAT ENDED UP BEING BOTH THE CANCER IN OUR ODD RELATIONSHIP, AND THE TITLE OF THE FIRST STORY.

MY JEALOUSY

DID YOU THINK I WOULDN'T NOTICE, LISBETH?
I SPENT ALMOST A YEAR OBSERVING YOUR BODY LANGUAGE, LEARNING THE ALPHABET OF YOUR EVERY MOAN, SIGH, AND WINCE! DECIPHERING THE MEANING OF EVERY LOOK IN YOUR EYES.
DID YOU THINK I WOULDN'T SEE THE *POISON* IN THEM?
I THOUGHT BY NOW AFTER ALL THIS TIME, YOU KNEW ME BETTER!
I MEAN... *JEALOUSY!?*
REALLY?
AFTER ALL YOUR PUSHING FOR ANOTHER SUB!?
"ALLISON CAN DO IT!" "ALLISON WOULD ROCK THAT!"
HEY, ALLISON! WHAT DO YOU THINK!? TWO SUBS, LIKE ONE OF THOSE '80S PAINTINGS, ONE CLINGING TO EACH OF YOUR LEGS!?
REMEMBER!?
I REMEMBERED.

AND THEN I FIND YOU A PLAYMATE AND YOU GET ALL PISSY ABOUT IT?
WHAT? WERE YOU LACKING MY ATTENTION?
WELL, YOU'RE IN LUCK! SINCE SARAH IS OFF ATTENDING HER TATTOO CONVENTION, YOU WILL HAVE MY FULL, UNDIVIDED ATTENTION FOR A FEW DAYS.
KSST
KSST
MPF!
KSST
HEH...I KINDA WONDER IF YOU'RE SMILING UNDER THAT MUZZLE.
I WAS...AS MUCH AS THE INFLATABLE GAG ALLOWED...WHICH WASN'T MUCH.
WE DO HAVE A LOT OF THINGS TO DISCUSS, BUT FIRST...
WHAT DO YOU SAY WE WARM UP WITH SOME FUN-TIME?
MMPH!
COMFY?
MMH!
I'LL TAKE THAT AS A YES!
SHE KNEW ME WELL...
OH, BY THE WAY...YOU KNOW HOW YOU KEPT SAYING I CAN TAKE CARE OF TWO SUBS?! AND THEN I DID JUST THAT! WELL, TURNS OUT IT SCREWED UP MY DOMME CALIBRATION, NOW I'M USED TO HANDLING TWO SUBS...
AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS! SINCE I ONLY HAVE YOU HERE, DOUBLE THE PLEASURE...
YAY!

AND DOUBLE THE *PAIN!*

OH CRAP!

DA-DING-DONG

BWAHTHEFUCK?

REALLY!?!?

NOW!?!?

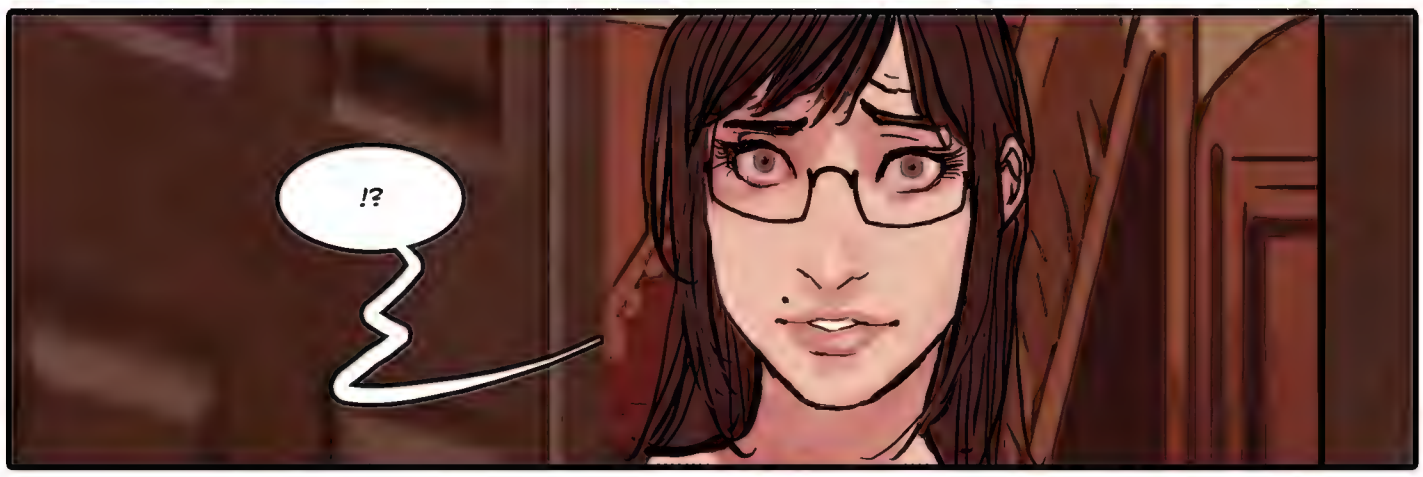
YOU GOTTA BE SHITTING ME WITH THIS TIMING!

DA-DING-DONG

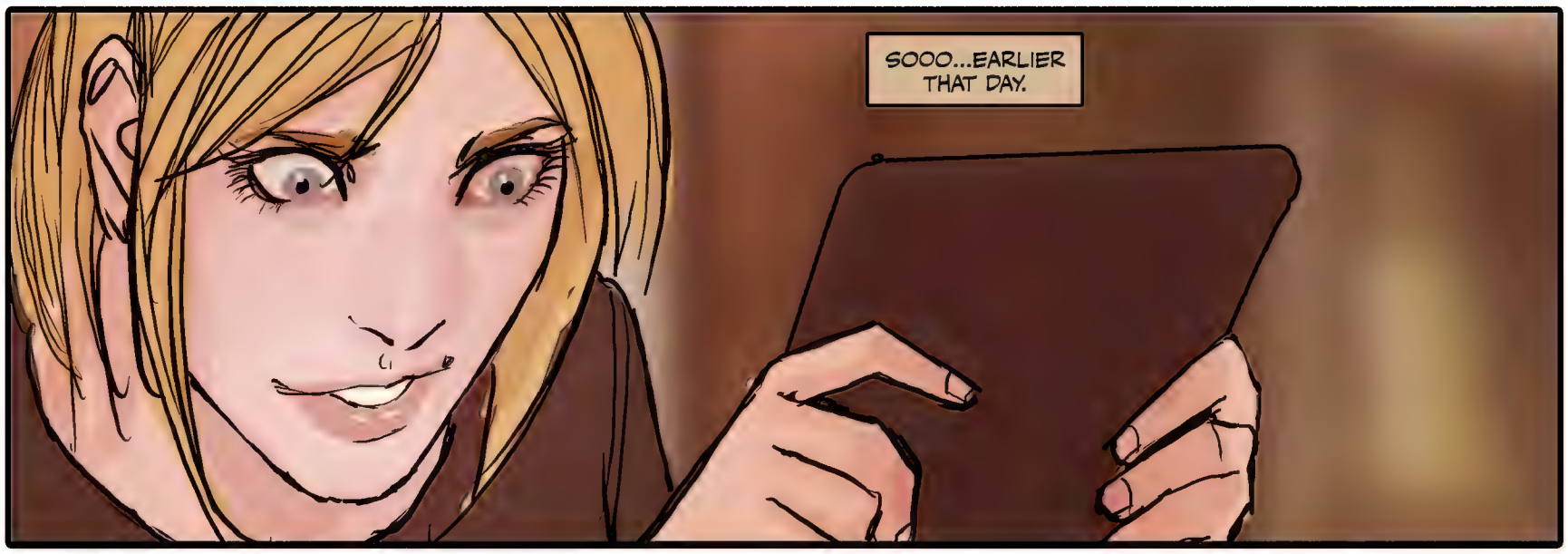
DA-DING-DONG

I'M COMING, HOLD YOUR HORSES!

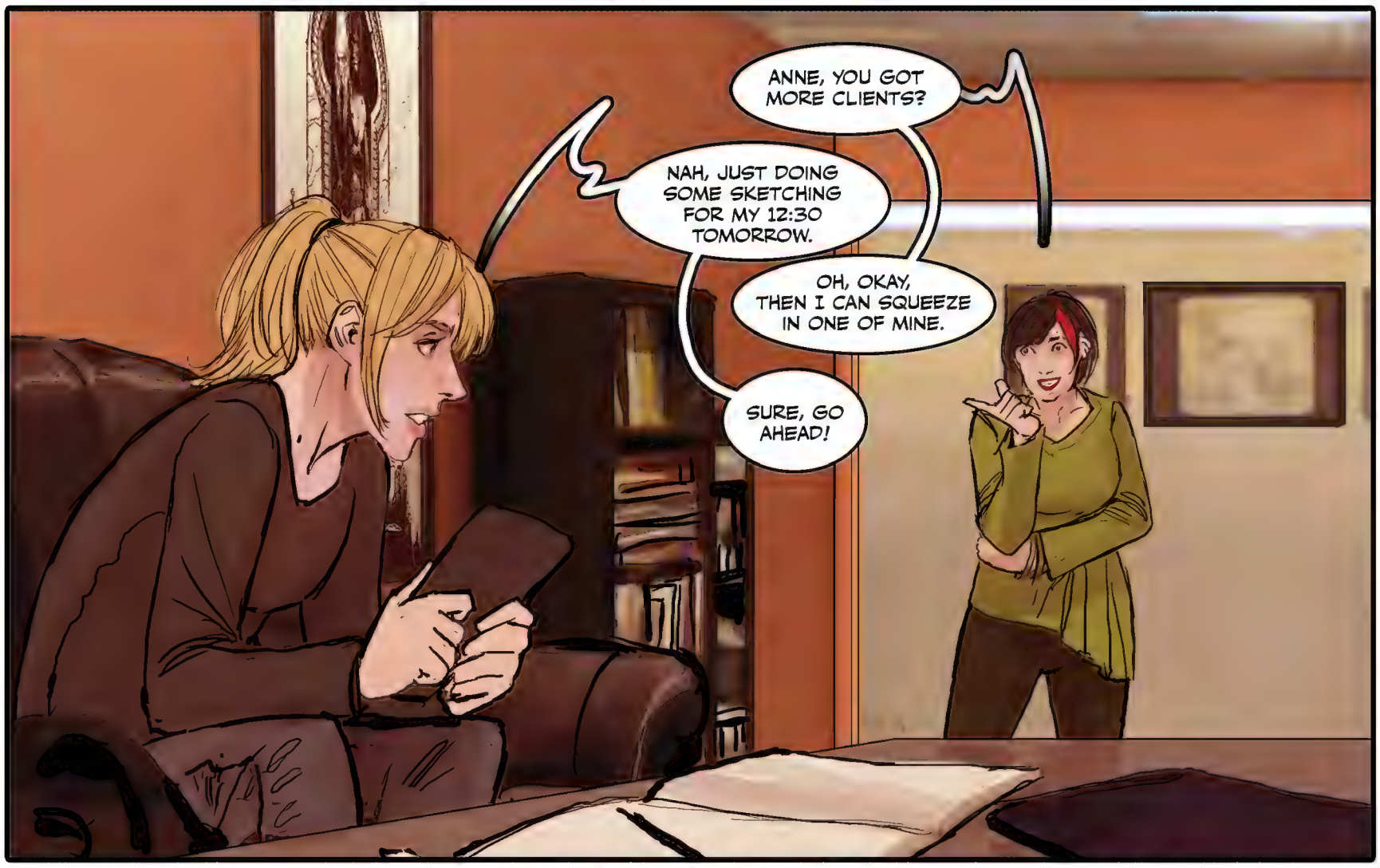
SPLUSH SPLOSH

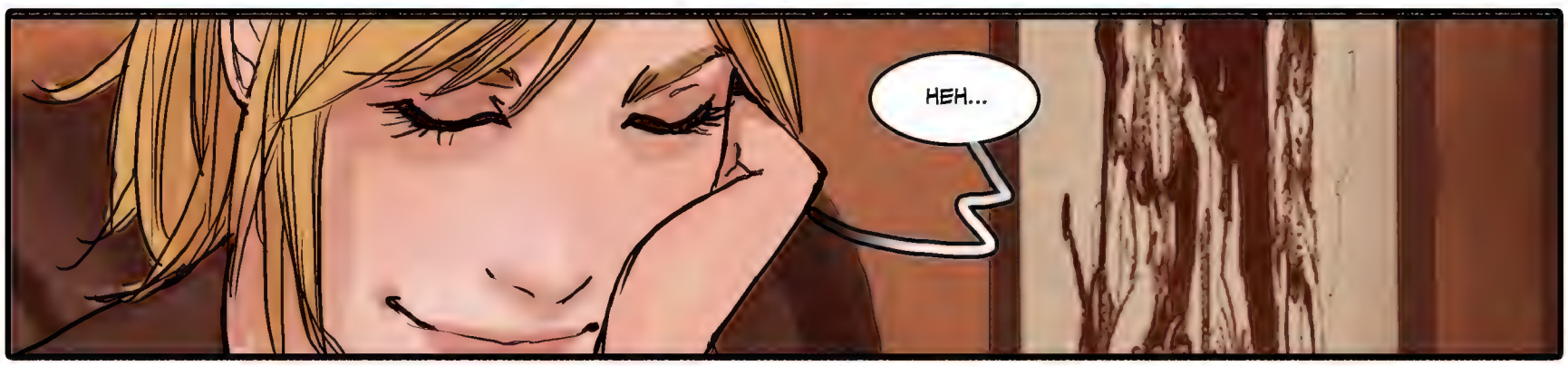


ANNE?
GOT A MINUTE?
ACTUALLY...
MAKE A MINUTE!
WE GOTTA TALK!


SOOO...EARLIER THAT DAY.

My jealousy


ANNE, YOU GOT MORE CLIENTS?
NAH, JUST DOING SOME SKETCHING FOR MY 12:30 TOMORROW.
OH, OKAY, THEN I CAN SQUEEZE IN ONE OF MINE.
SURE, GO AHEAD!

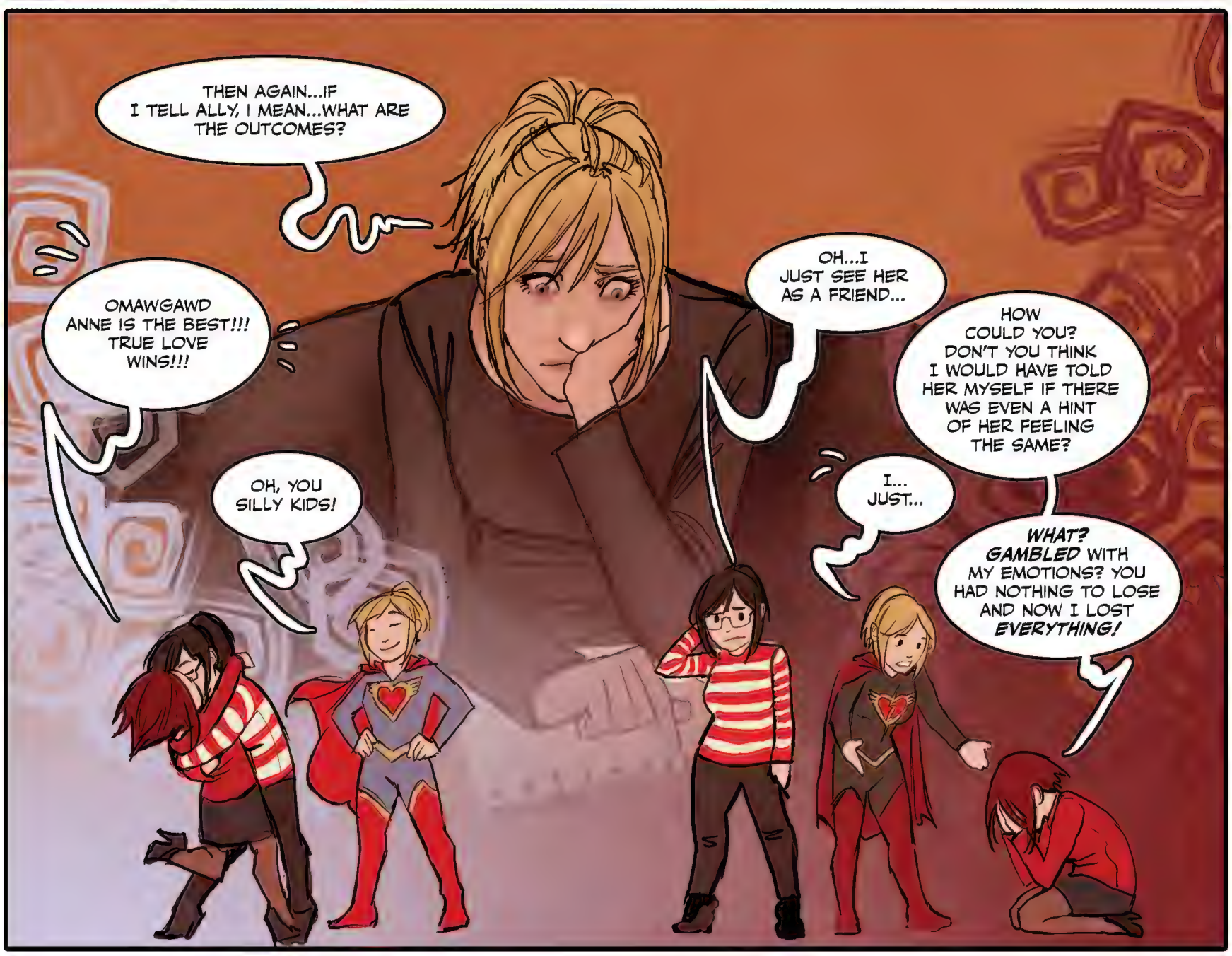

HEH...

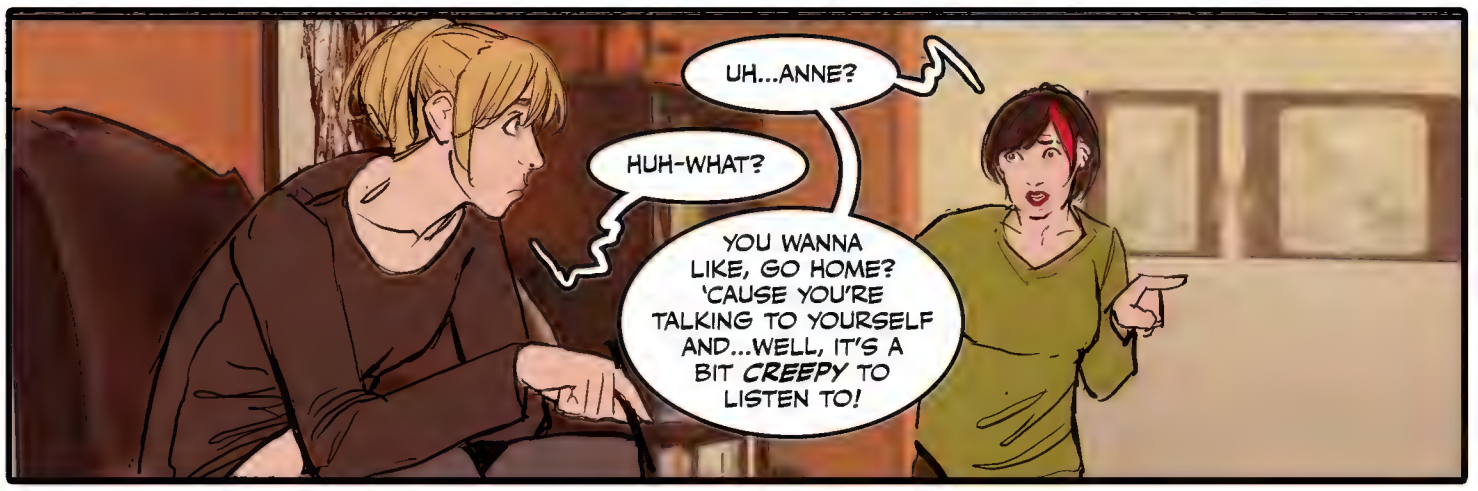
YOU HAD ME FOOLED FOR A MOMENT...
WHEN YOU GOT ALL DRAMA QUEEN ON ME, I THOUGHT, THE BEST FRIEND'S JEALOUSY...HELL, I HAD THAT SHIT IN COLLEGE WITH CASSIE. I *GET* THAT...
BUT OH NO, LISA!
I'VE *SEEN* THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES!
YOU'RE TOTALLY IN LOVE!
BUT...WHAT ABOUT *ALLY?*

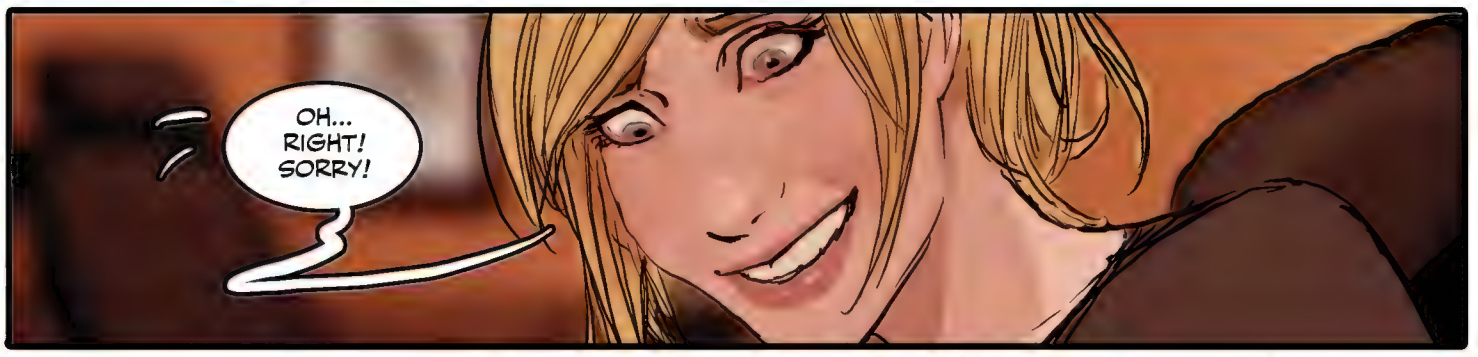
HM...

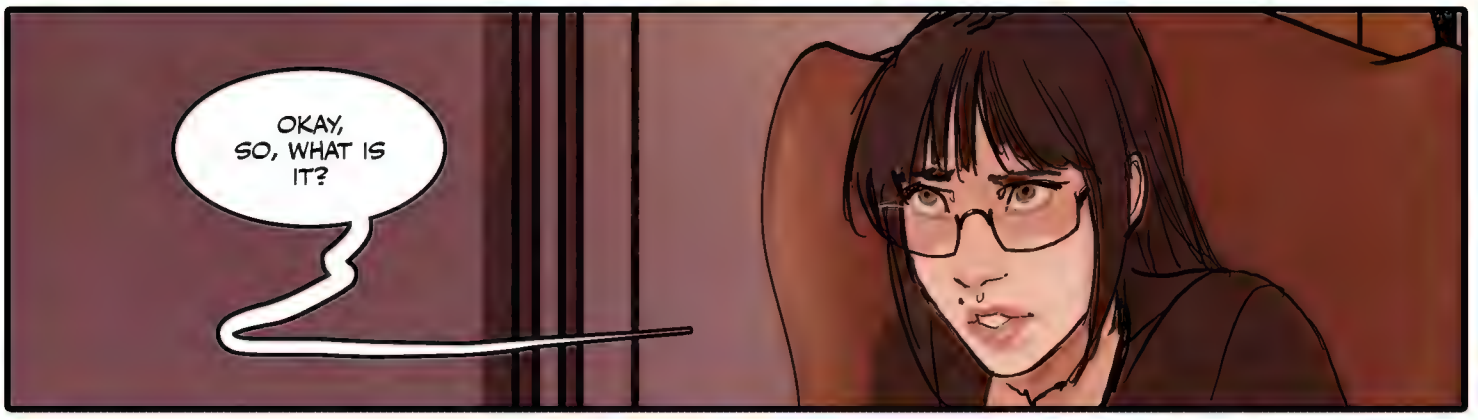
I *COULD* DO NOTHING...

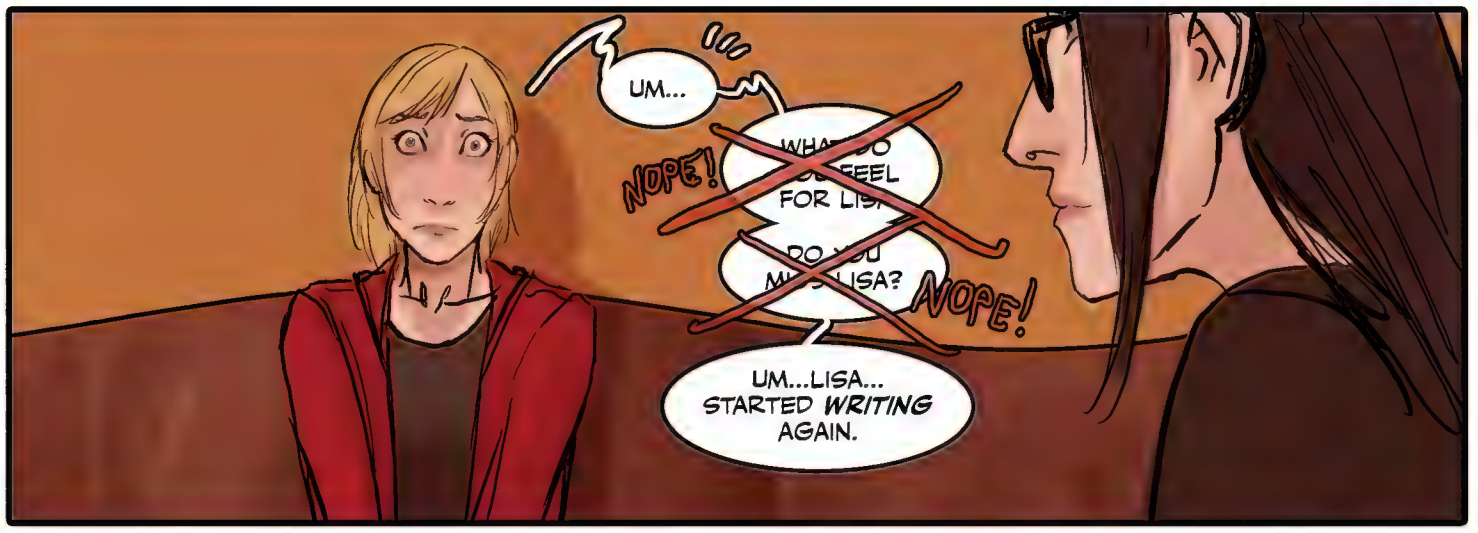
OR...I COULD SAY SOMETHING.


THEN AGAIN...IF I TELL ALLY, I MEAN...WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?
OMAWGAWD ANNE IS THE BEST!!! TRUE LOVE WINS!!!
OH, YOU SILLY KIDS!
OH...I JUST SEE HER AS A FRIEND...
HOW COULD YOU? DON'T YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE TOLD HER MYSELF IF THERE WAS EVEN A HINT OF HER FEELING THE SAME?
I... JUST...
WHAT? GAMBLED WITH MY EMOTIONS? YOU HAD NOTHING TO LOSE AND NOW I LOST *EVERYTHING!*

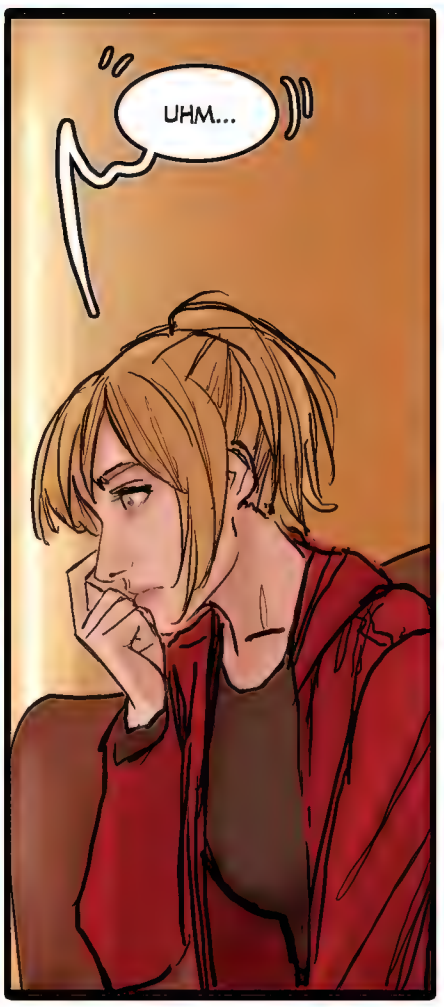

UH...ANNE?
HUH-WHAT?
YOU WANNA LIKE, GO HOME? 'CAUSE YOU'RE TALKING TO YOURSELF AND...WELL, IT'S A BIT *CREEPY* TO LISTEN TO!

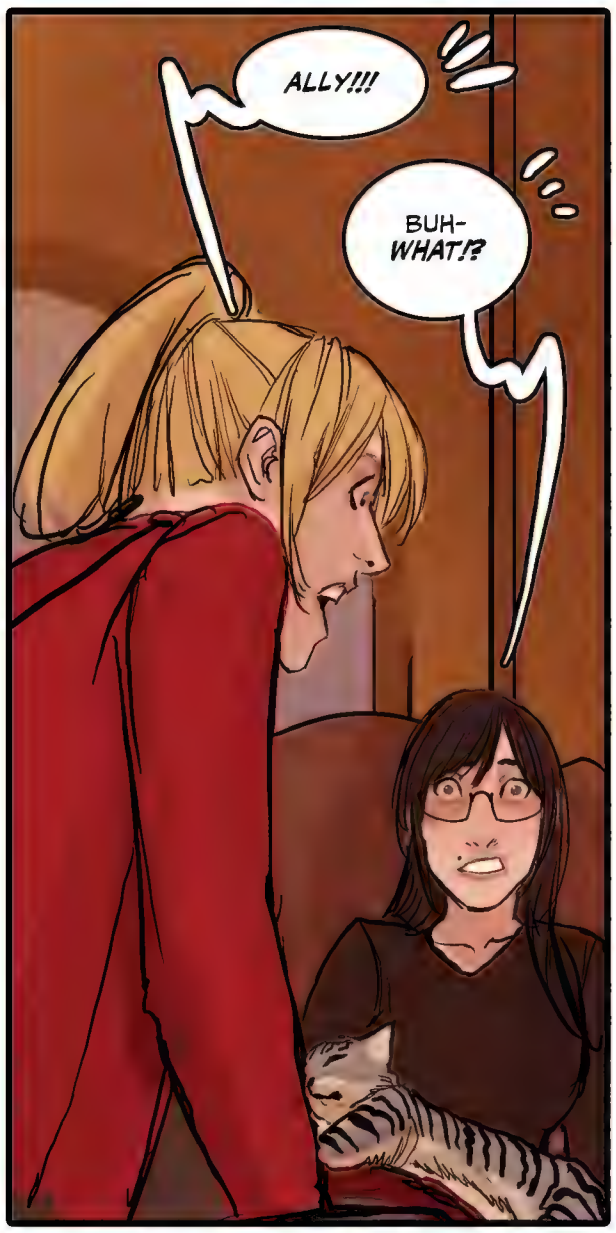

OH... RIGHT! SORRY!


OKAY, SO, WHAT IS IT?


UM...
NOPE!
FOR LIS
NOPE!
UM...LISA... STARTED *WRITING* AGAIN.

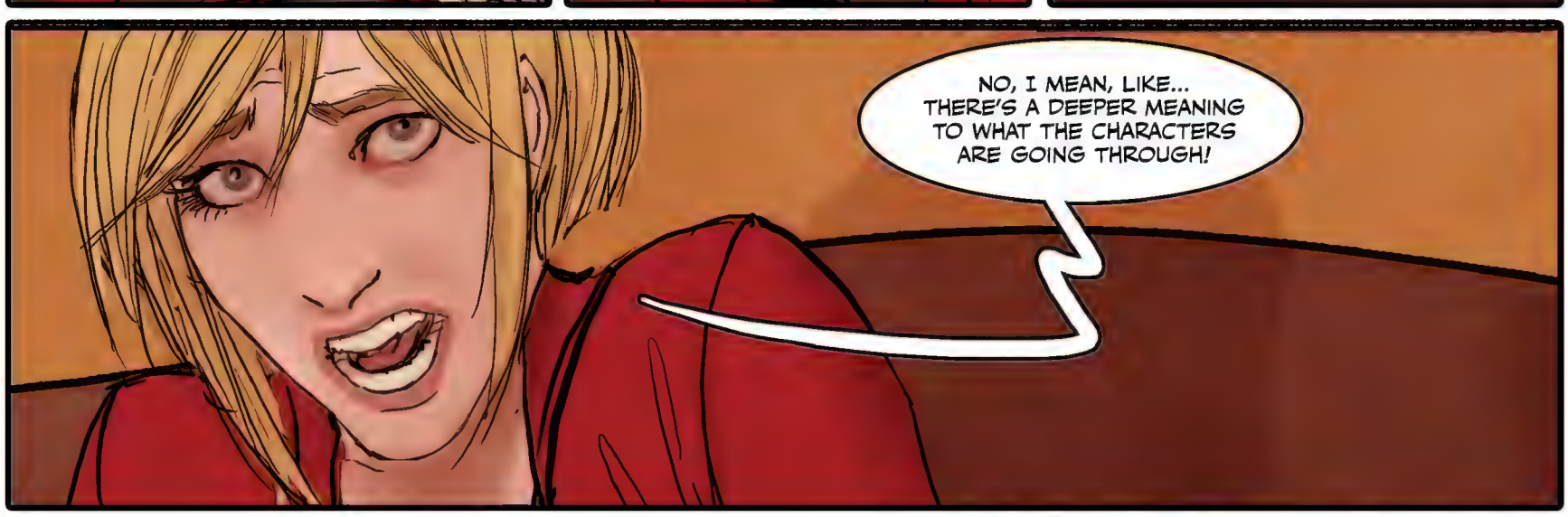
I NOTICED.

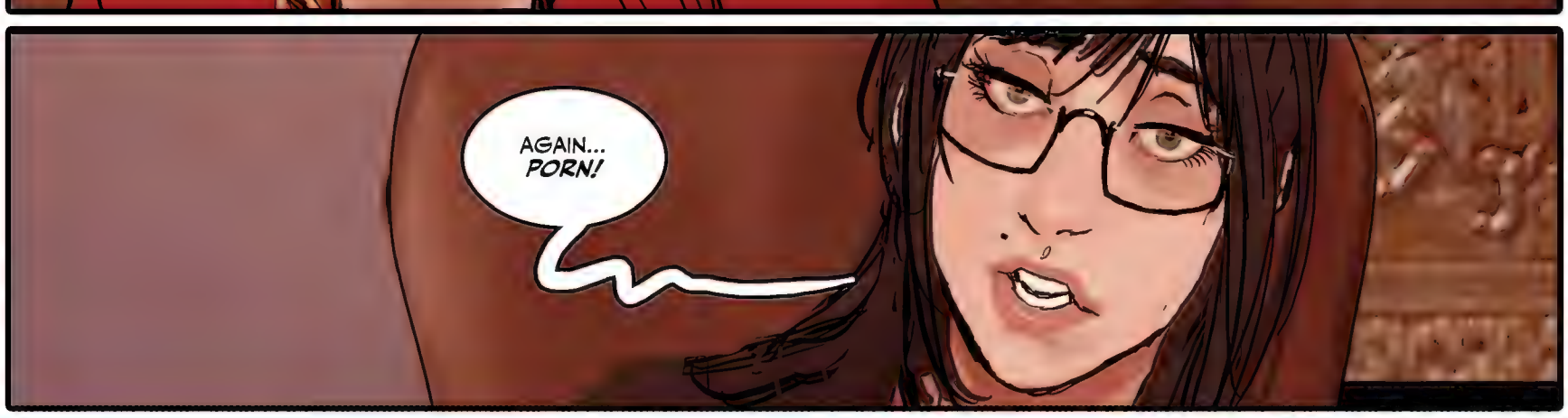

UHM...


ALLY!!!
BUH-WHAT!?

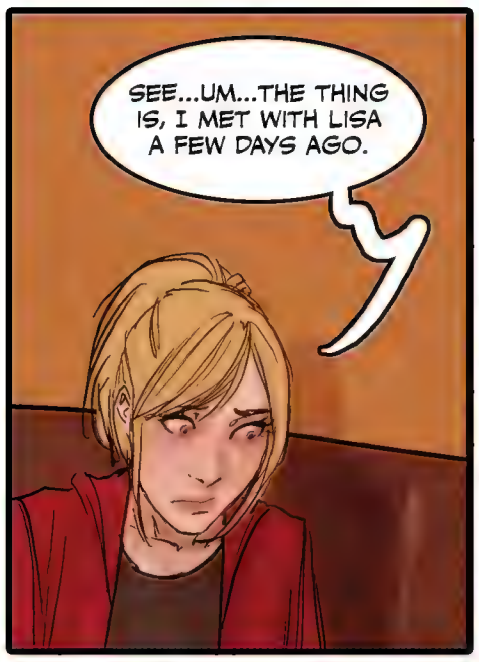
YOU THINK THERE ARE MAYBE, UH... SUBTLE HINTS IN LISA'S STORIES?

IT'S...PORN!
GOOD PORN, BUT STILL... Y'KNOW, PORN!


NO, I MEAN, LIKE... THERE'S A DEEPER MEANING TO WHAT THE CHARACTERS ARE GOING THROUGH!

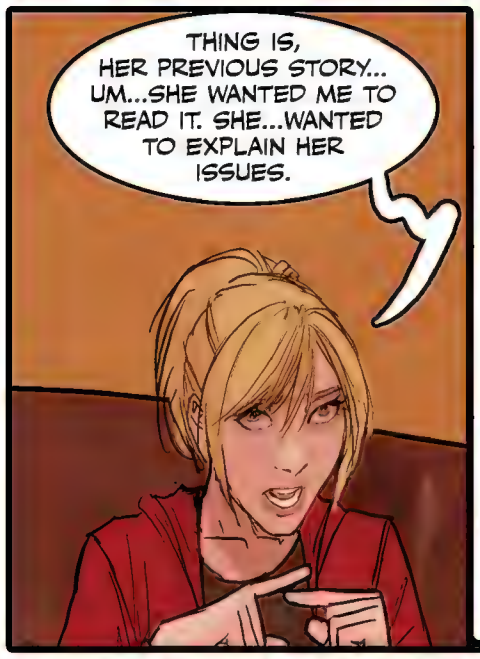

AGAIN... PORN!

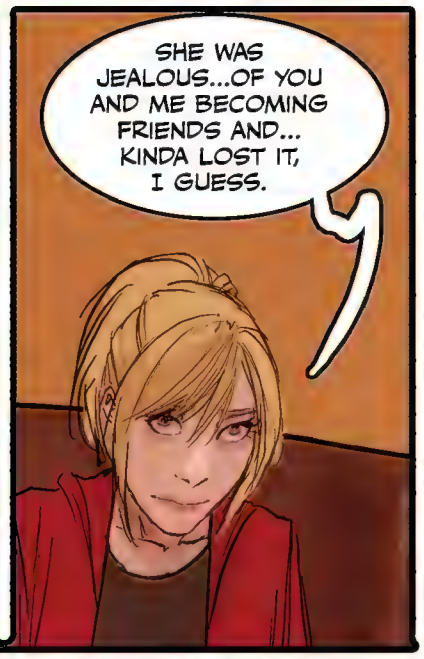
IN HER LATEST STORY... UM...LISBETH IS JEALOUS OF SARAH...OF...ME.
I WAS ACTUALLY JUST READING IT.
OH...UM...


SEE...UM...THE THING IS, I MET WITH LISA A FEW DAYS AGO.

OH?

SHE WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR... HALLOWEEN, AND NOT CALLING...


THING IS, HER PREVIOUS STORY... UM...SHE WANTED ME TO READ IT. SHE...WANTED TO EXPLAIN HER ISSUES.


SHE WAS JEALOUS...OF YOU AND ME BECOMING FRIENDS AND... KINDA LOST IT, I GUESS.

I SEE...

MY POINT IS, UM...SHE USED THE STORY TO PUT IT INTO WORDS...

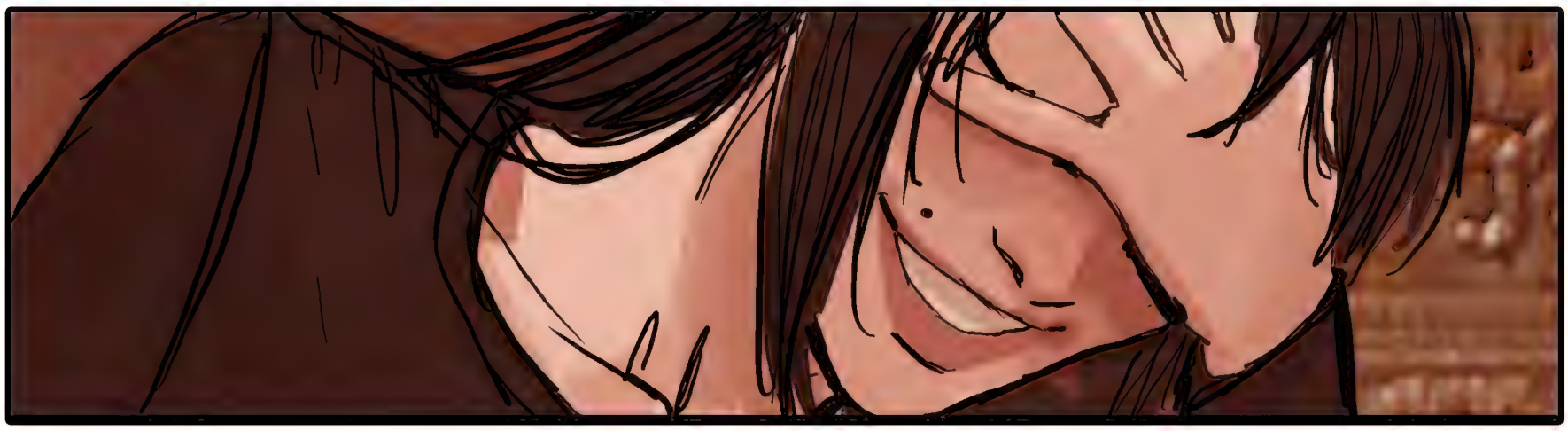
SO...YOU THINK SHE...UM...WHAT *ARE* YOU THINKING?

I THINK SHE IS WRITING *MESSAGES*...

?

TO *YOU!*

...



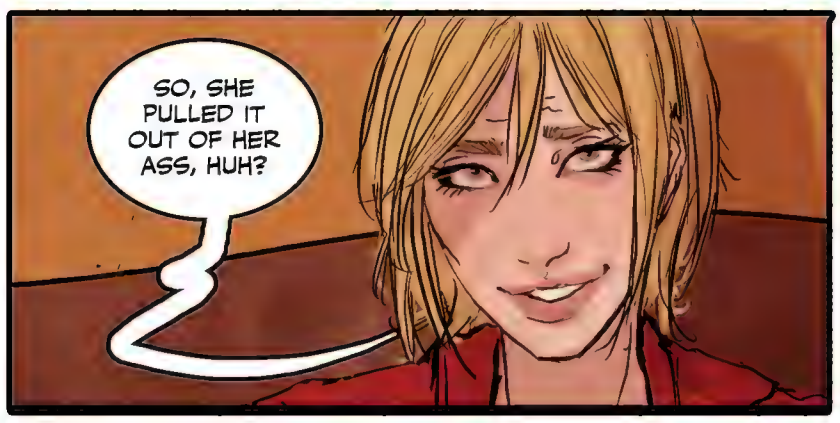
HER STORIES, THE ONES ABOUT ALLISON AND LISBETH...THEY ARE SORT OF A COMPILATION OF FANTASIES WE JOKED ABOUT OR DISCUSSED ONLINE...

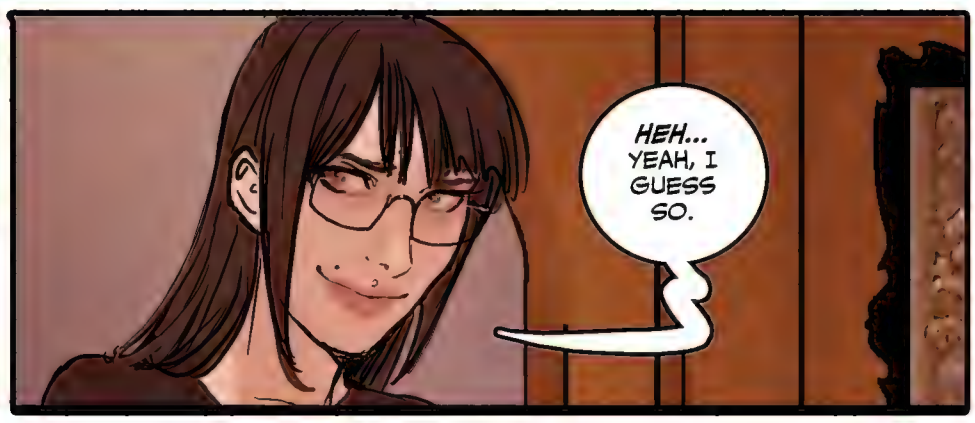
I'LL GIVE YOU SOME EXAMPLES! THERE IS A STORY ABOUT US THAT HEAVILY INVOLVES ***ENEMA*** PLAY.

WE ***NEVER*** DID ENEMA PLAY!

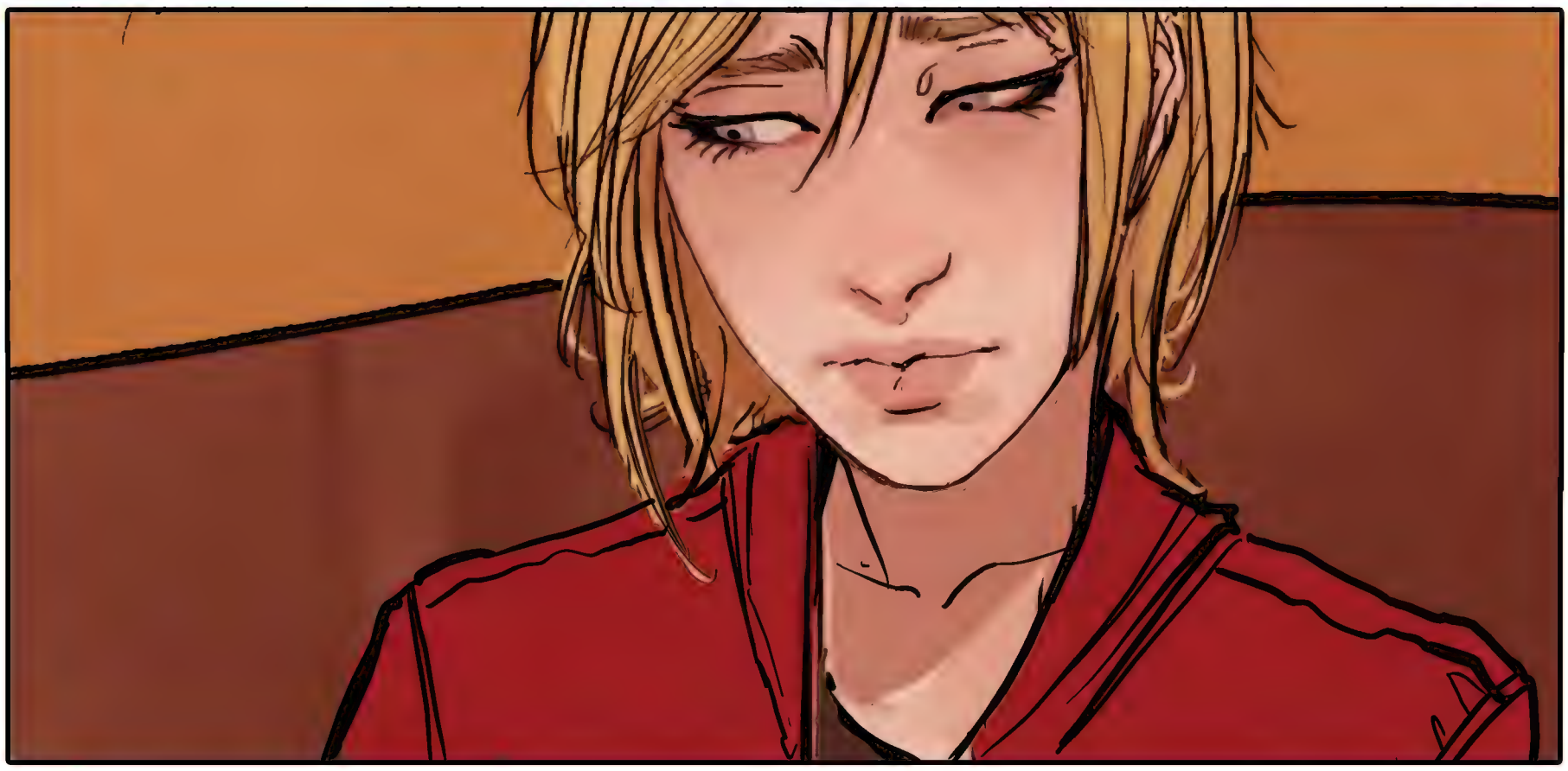
SHE STILL WROTE A STORY ABOUT IT.

Lisbeth

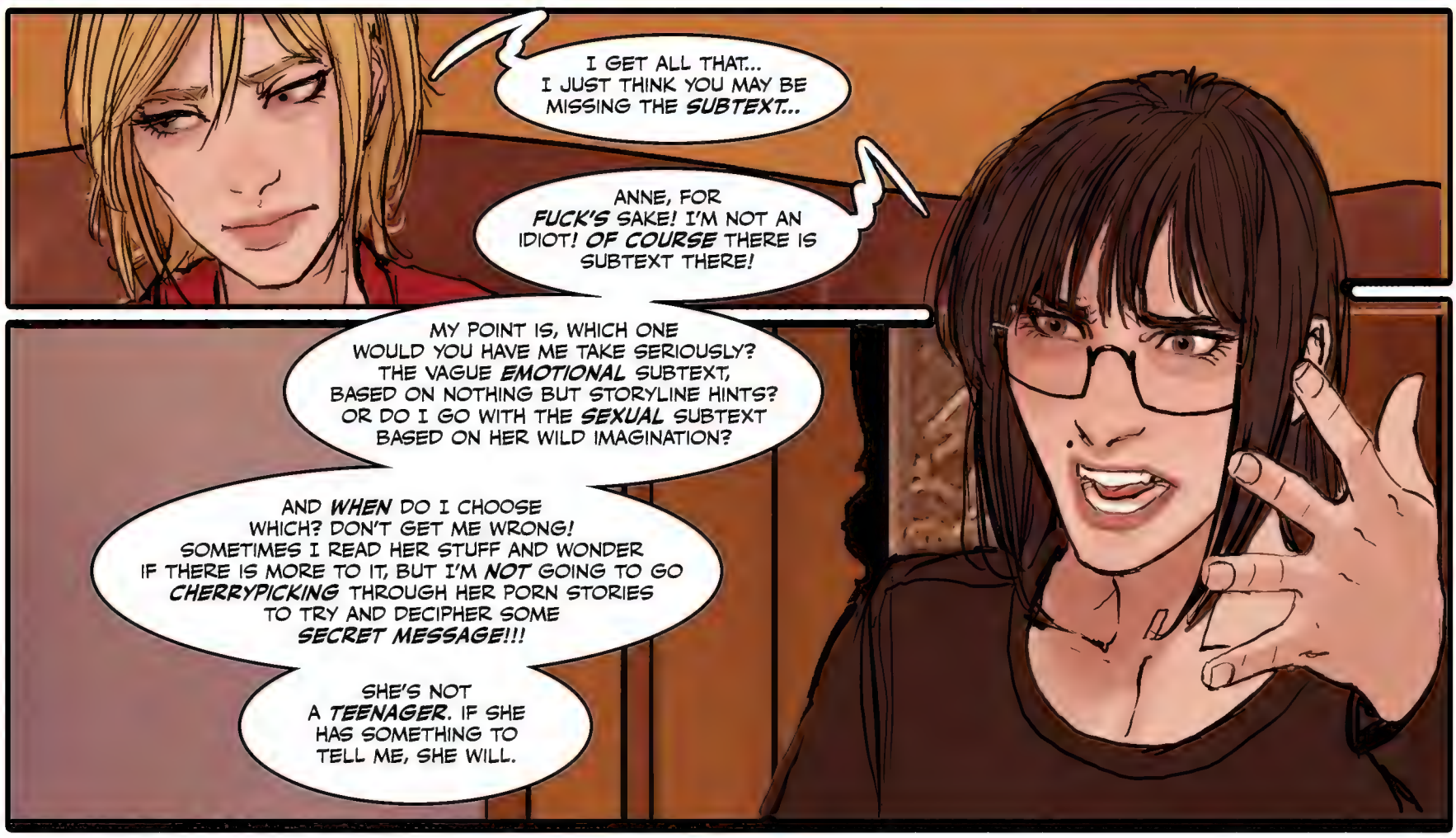




AND HONESTLY, THAT'S TRUE FOR MOST OF HER WRITING.
SHE HAS SIX STORIES ABOUT *PONYPLAY* ALONE.
WHILE I HAVE CONSIDERED IT, WE NEVER ACTUALLY DID THAT.
NEVER DID PETPLAY, OR PUBLIC HUMILIATION...IT WAS ALL JUST TWO HORNY PEOPLE ONLINE DISCUSSING CRAZY IDEAS.
Lisbeth



THESE IDEAS WERE *HOT,* SHE WROTE AMAZING STORIES BASED ON THEM, BUT ON ANY REALISTIC LEVEL WE WERE BOTH AWARE WE WOUDN'T ACTUALLY *ACT ON THEM.*
I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING SHE TOLD ME ONCE. THE LAW OF WRITING PORN STATES THAT THE RULE OF *HOT* TRUMPS THE RULE OF *REAL!*
Lilith
The unseen leash

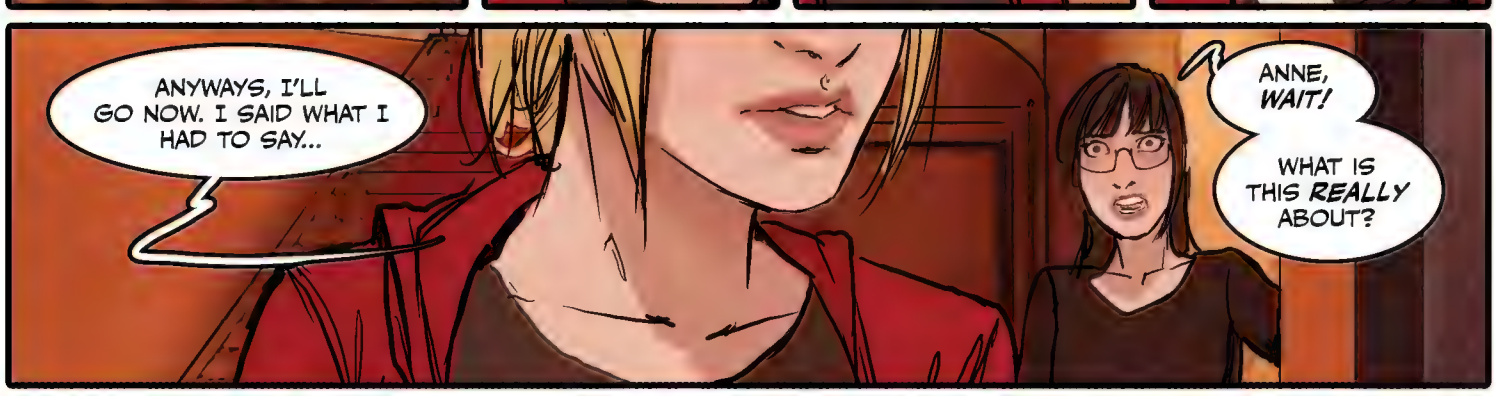

I GET ALL THAT... I JUST THINK YOU MAY BE MISSING THE *SUBTEXT...*
ANNE, FOR *FUCK'S* SAKE! I'M NOT AN IDIOT! *OF COURSE* THERE IS SUBTEXT THERE!
MY POINT IS, WHICH ONE WOULD YOU HAVE ME TAKE SERIOUSLY? THE VAGUE *EMOTIONAL* SUBTEXT, BASED ON NOTHING BUT STORYLINE HINTS? OR DO I GO WITH THE *SEXUAL* SUBTEXT BASED ON HER WILD IMAGINATION?
AND *WHEN* DO I CHOOSE WHICH? DON'T GET ME WRONG! SOMETIMES I READ HER STUFF AND WONDER IF THERE IS MORE TO IT, BUT I'M *NOT* GOING TO GO *CHERRYPICKING* THROUGH HER PORN STORIES TO TRY AND DECIPHER SOME *SECRET MESSAGE!!!*
SHE'S NOT A *TEENAGER.* IF SHE HAS SOMETHING TO TELL ME, SHE WILL.

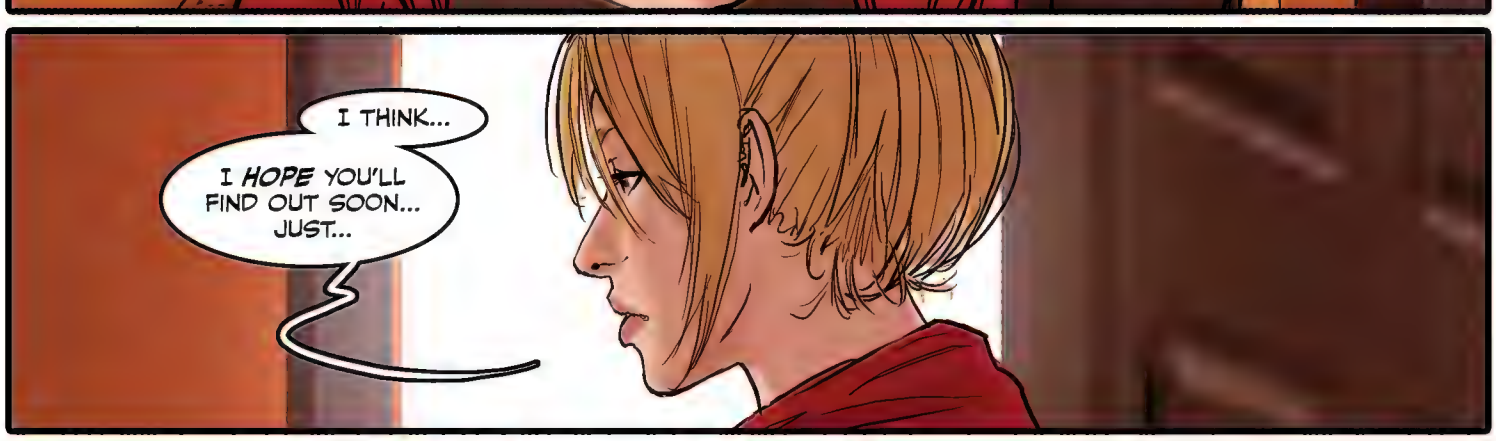
WHAT IF IT'S SOMETHING SHE CAN'T TELL YOU TO YOUR FACE BECAUSE...

BECAUSE?

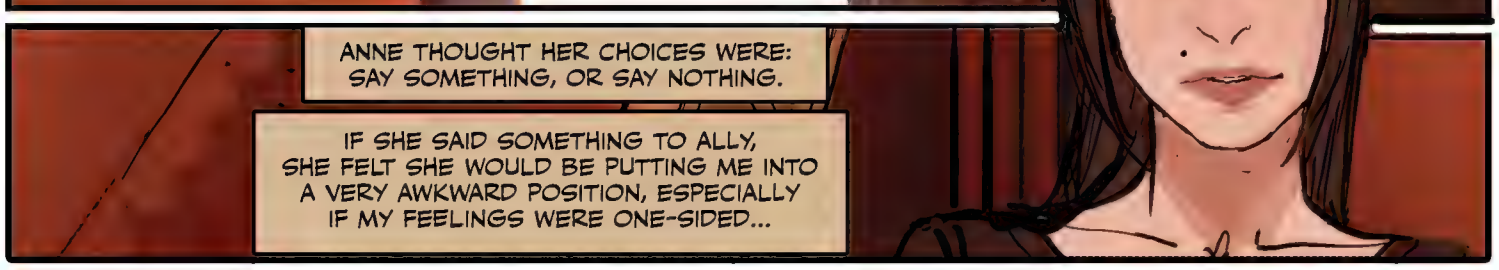
BECAUSE MAYBE SHE'S AFRAID OF YOUR RESPONSE!

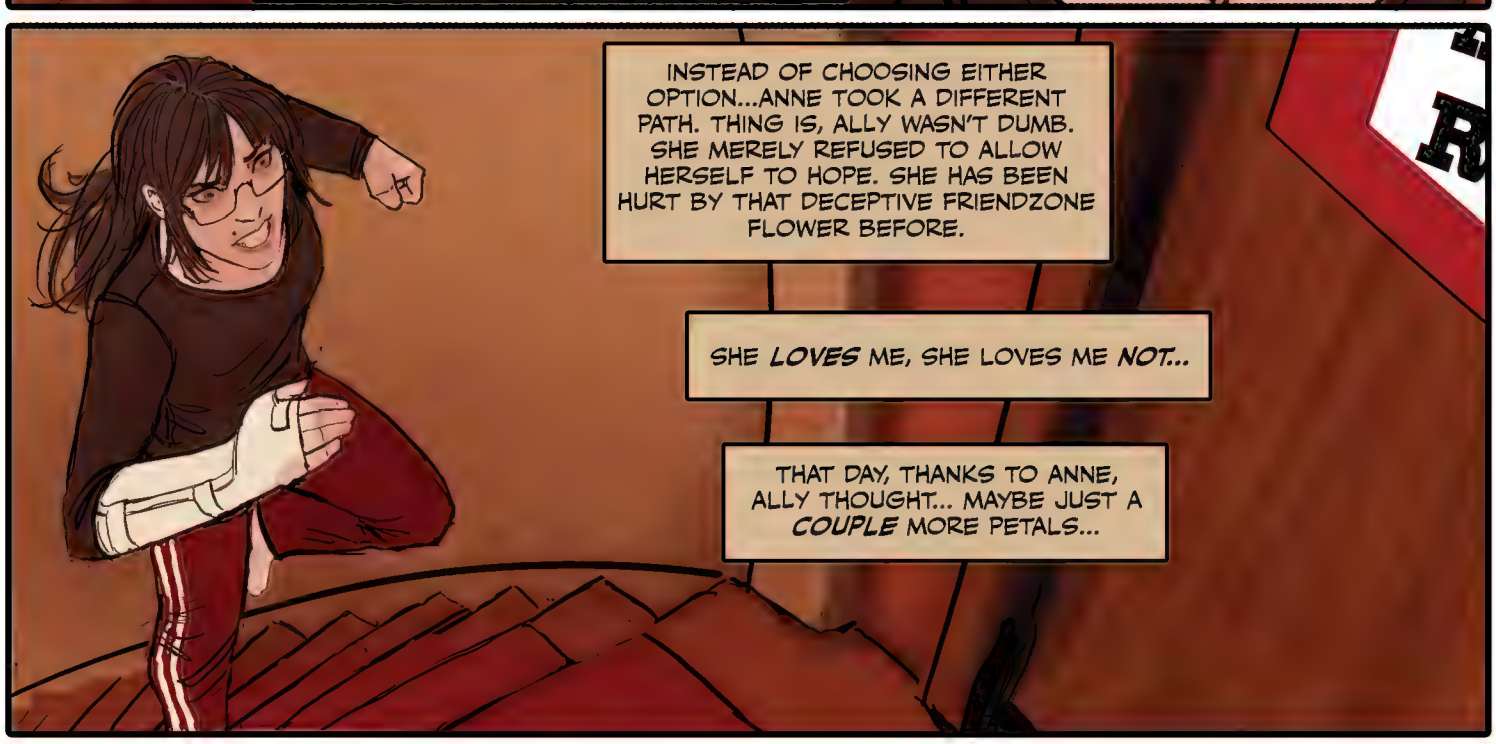
RIGHT IN THE PERSONAL INSECURITY!


ANYWAYS, I'LL GO NOW. I SAID WHAT I HAD TO SAY...
ANNE, WAIT!
WHAT IS THIS REALLY ABOUT?


I THINK...
I HOPE YOU'LL FIND OUT SOON... JUST...

READ THE STORIES!


ANNE THOUGHT HER CHOICES WERE: SAY SOMETHING, OR SAY NOTHING.
IF SHE SAID SOMETHING TO ALLY, SHE FELT SHE WOULD BE PUTTING ME INTO A VERY AWKWARD POSITION, ESPECIALLY IF MY FEELINGS WERE ONE-SIDED...


INSTEAD OF CHOOSING EITHER OPTION...ANNE TOOK A DIFFERENT PATH. THING IS, ALLY WASN'T DUMB. SHE MERELY REFUSED TO ALLOW HERSELF TO HOPE. SHE HAS BEEN HURT BY THAT DECEPTIVE FRIENDZONE FLOWER BEFORE.
SHE LOVES ME, SHE LOVES ME NOT...
THAT DAY, THANKS TO ANNE, ALLY THOUGHT... MAYBE JUST A COUPLE MORE PETALS...

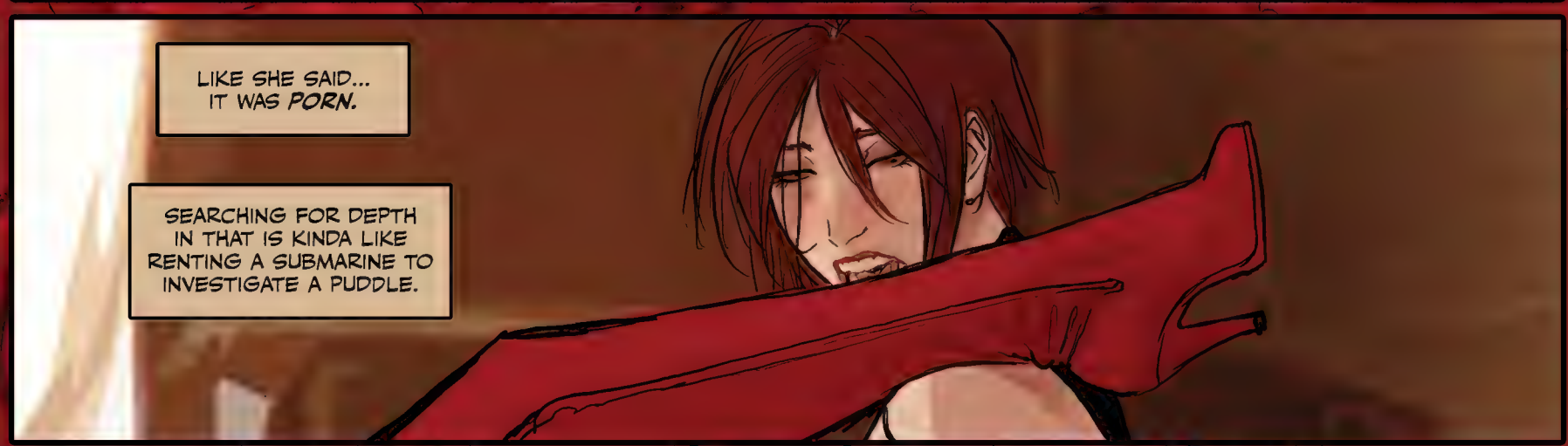
DON'T OVERTHINK PORN!
IF THERE WAS A LIST OF RULES FOR PORN, THAT ONE WOULD BE PRETTY HIGH UP THERE.
KIND OF A SISTER RULE TO: PORN DOESN'T REPRESENT THE REALITY OF SEX!
IN PORN, THE RULE OF HOT TRUMPS THE RULE OF REAL!
I MEAN, HOW MANY PIZZA DELIVERIES END IN GAMES OF HIDE THE SALAMI? AMIRITE?
BUT YEAH...DON'T OVERTHINK PORN...SIMPLE, MAKES SENSE... SO NATURALLY, I SHIT ALL OVER THAT RULE BY HIDING IMPORTANT MESSAGES WITHIN MY OWN BIT OF SMUT.

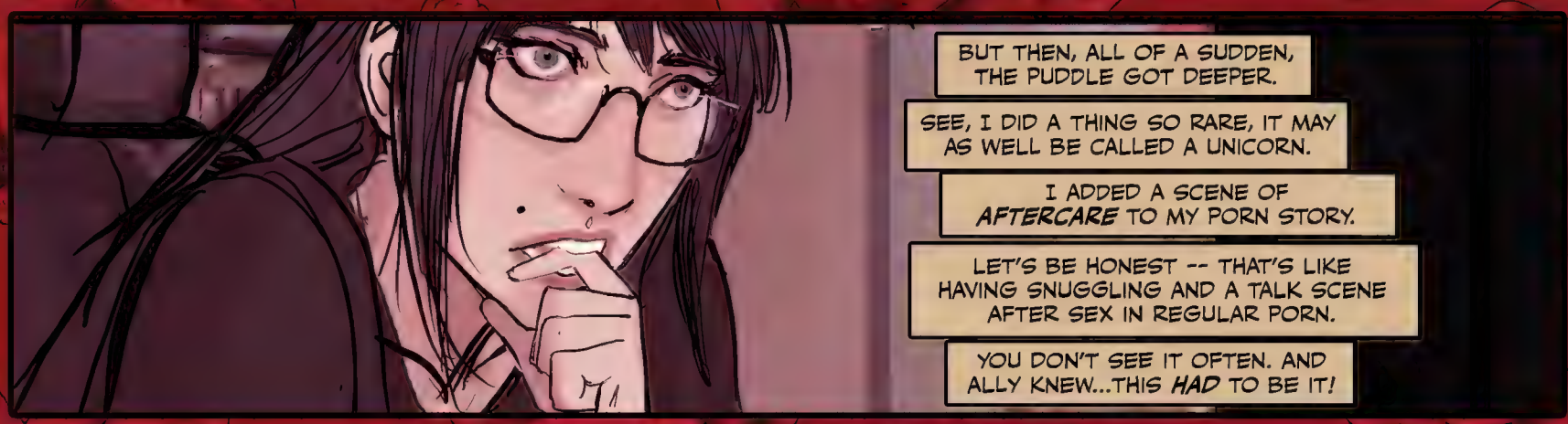
AND IF THEY EXISTED, ALLY WAS DETERMINED TO FIND THEM!
HMMM...
UH...CAN WE HELP YOU?

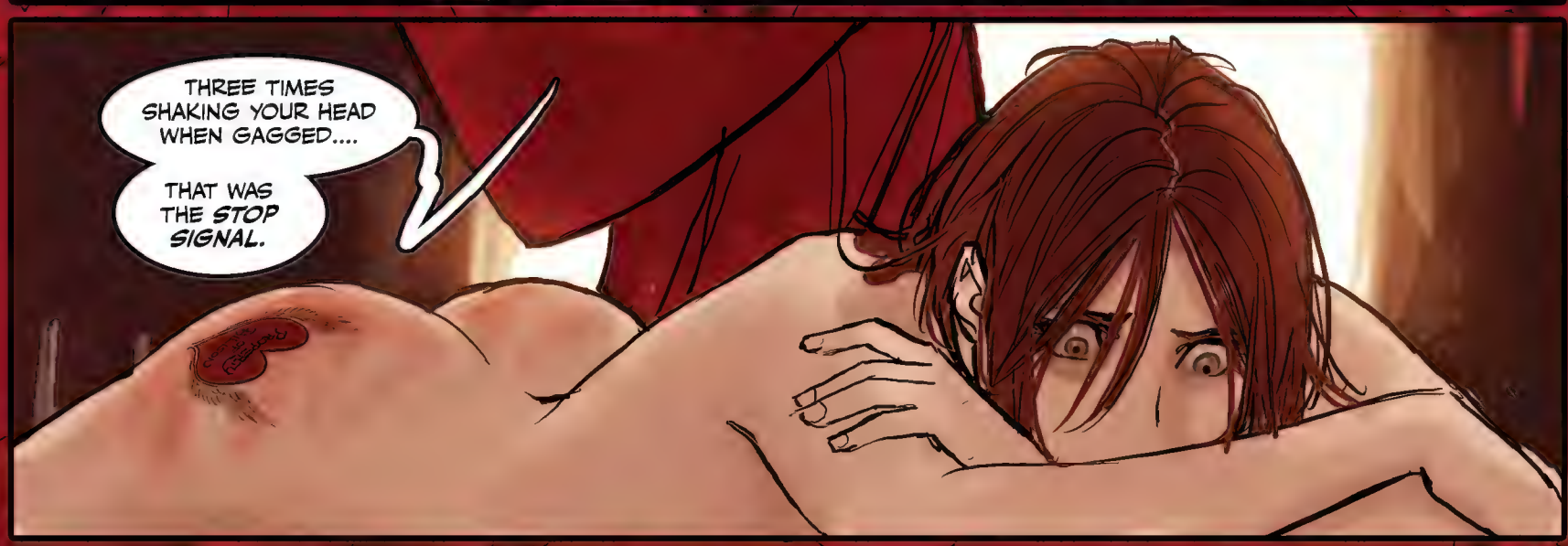
NO-NO, JUST CARRY ON, IGNORE ME!

I'M LOOKING FOR SOMETHING *IMPORTANT!*
WELL...UM, THIS WAS HOW *I* IMAGINED IT.

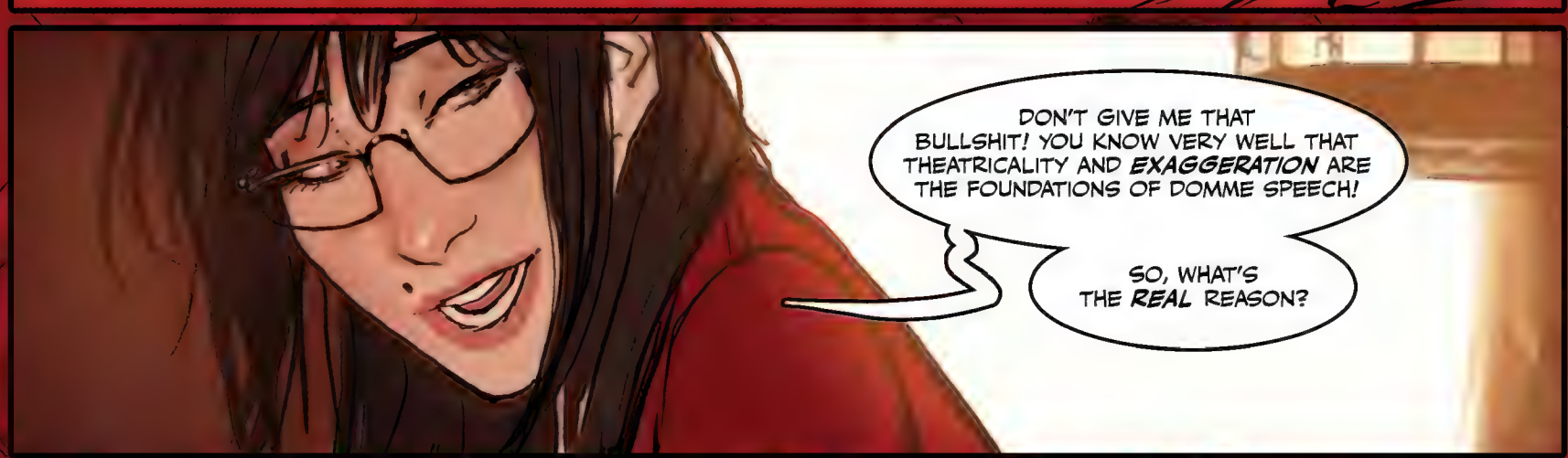
JOKES ASIDE, ALLY READ THE STORY WITH A NERVOUS KNOT IN HER STOMACH.
HOPING THAT ANNE WAS RIGHT...
FEARING THAT SHE WASN'T.


LIKE SHE SAID... IT WAS *PORN.*
SEARCHING FOR DEPTH IN THAT IS KINDA LIKE RENTING A SUBMARINE TO INVESTIGATE A PUDDLE.


BUT THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE PUDDLE GOT DEEPER.
SEE, I DID A THING SO RARE, IT MAY AS WELL BE CALLED A UNICORN.
I ADDED A SCENE OF *AFTERCARE* TO MY PORN STORY.
LET'S BE HONEST -- THAT'S LIKE HAVING SNUGGLING AND A TALK SCENE AFTER SEX IN REGULAR PORN.
YOU DON'T SEE IT OFTEN. AND ALLY KNEW...THIS *HAD* TO BE IT!

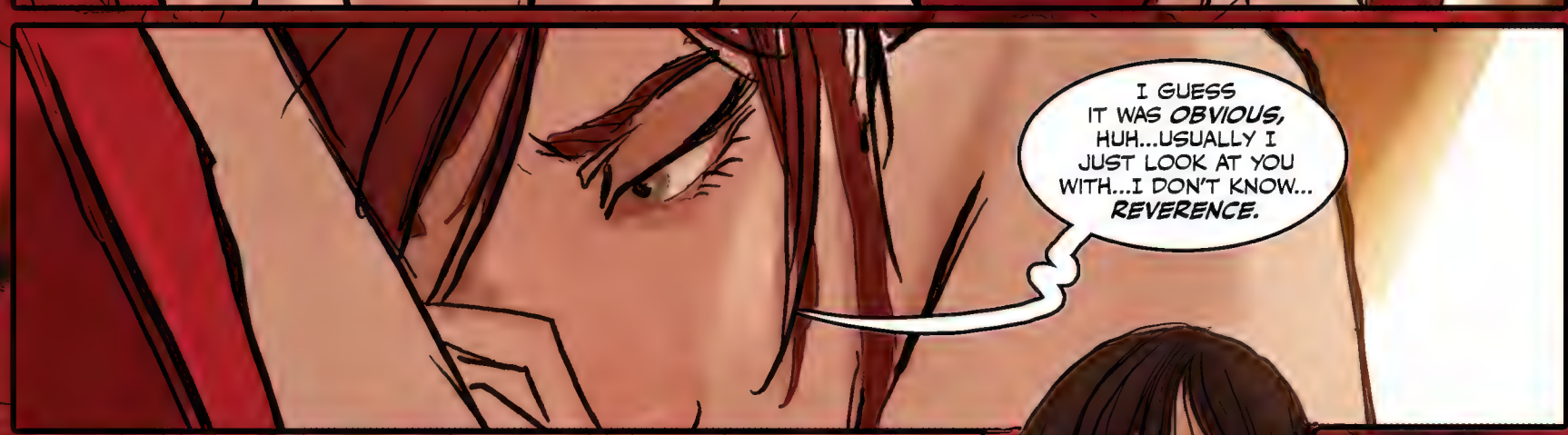

THREE TIMES SHAKING YOUR HEAD WHEN GAGGED....
THAT WAS THE *STOP SIGNAL.*

SO...YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN TO ME WHY YOU'D LET ME TAKE IT *THIS* FAR?
DIDN'T YOU *LIKE* IT?
WELL...YES! BUT I PREFER THAT *BOTH* MY INNER *SADIST* AND YOUR *SUBMISSIVE* SIDE ARE SATISFIED...USUALLY YOUR LIMITS ARE MUCH LOWER.
WHAT ABOUT THAT WHOLE *DOUBLE THE PLEASURE, DOUBLE THE PAIN* BUSINESS?

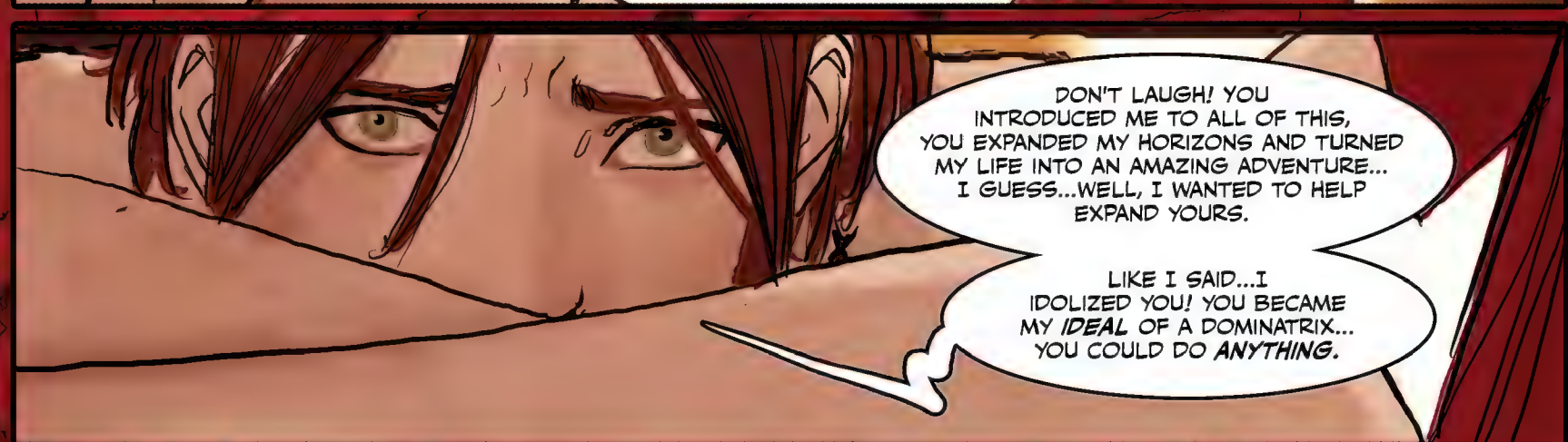

DON'T GIVE ME THAT BULLSHIT! YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT THEATRICALITY AND *EXAGGERATION* ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF DOMME SPEECH!
SO, WHAT'S THE *REAL* REASON?

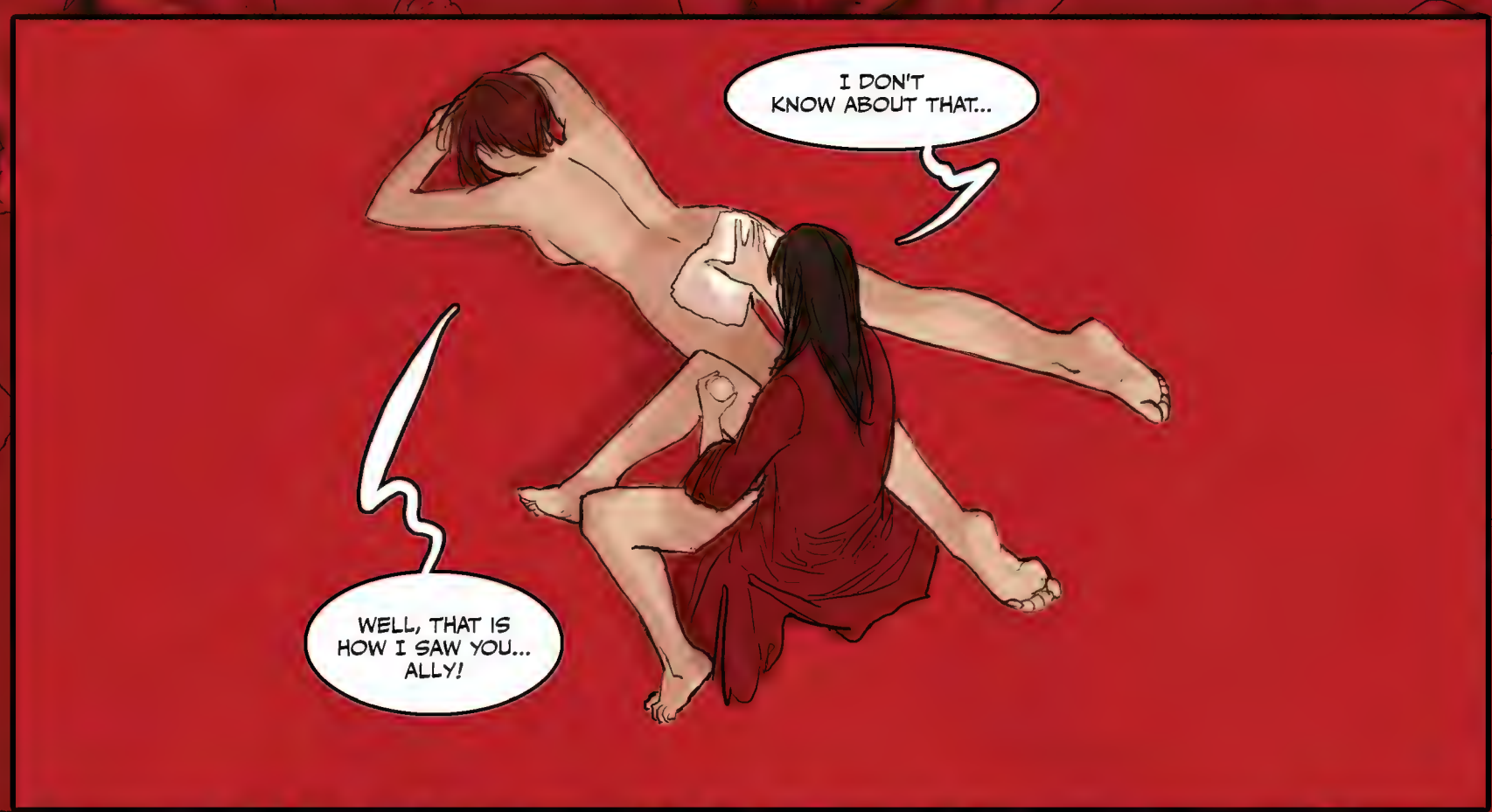
BECAUSE... I DON'T KNOW... I NEEDED IT. NO, I *DESERVED* IT!

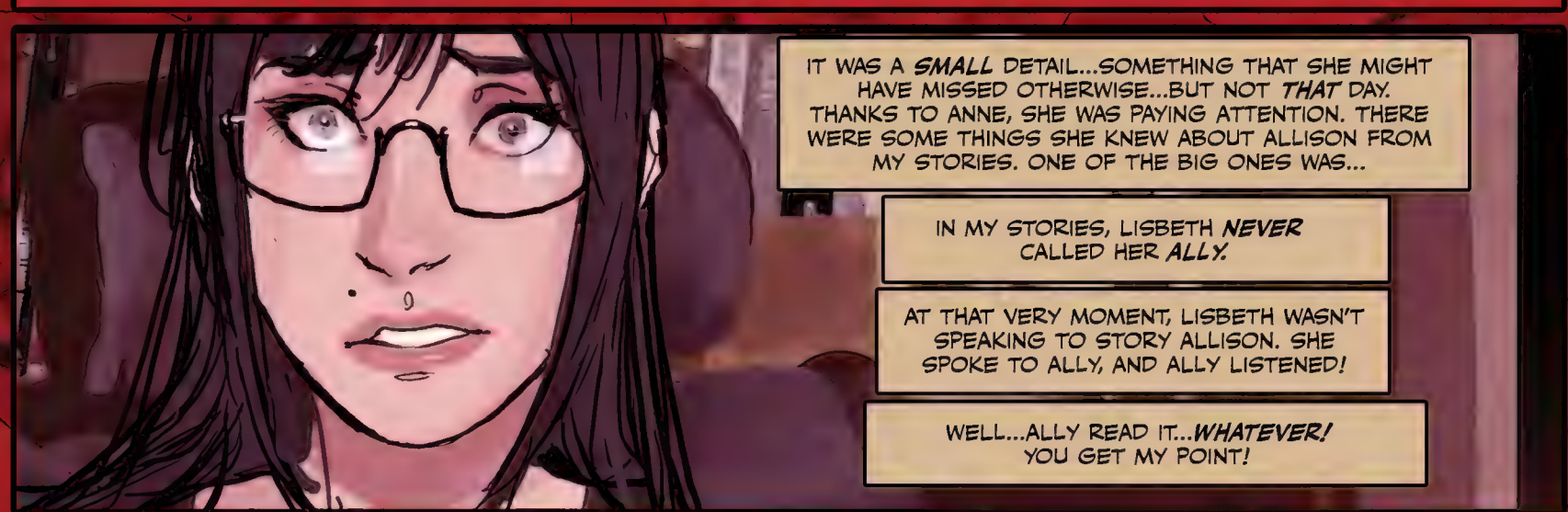
UH-HUH, THAT'S *EVERY* SUB EVER. YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO BE *WAY* MORE SPECIFIC!
TRY AGAIN?
I MEAN IT! WHAT YOU TOLD ME...THE *POISON* YOU SAW IN MY EYES -- IT'S *TRUE!*


I GUESS IT WAS *OBVIOUS,* HUH...USUALLY I JUST LOOK AT YOU WITH...I DON'T KNOW... *REVERENCE.*

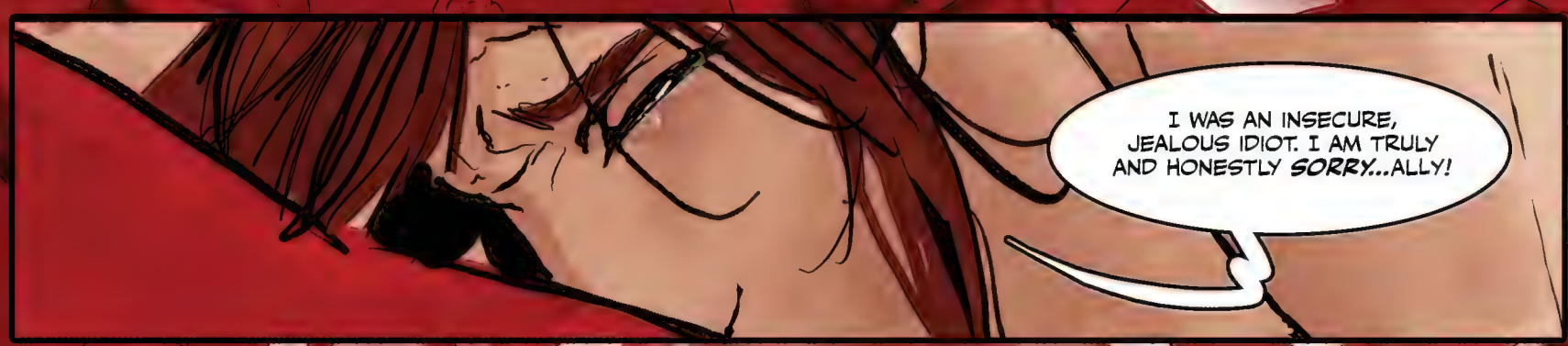
KHM *WHAT?*

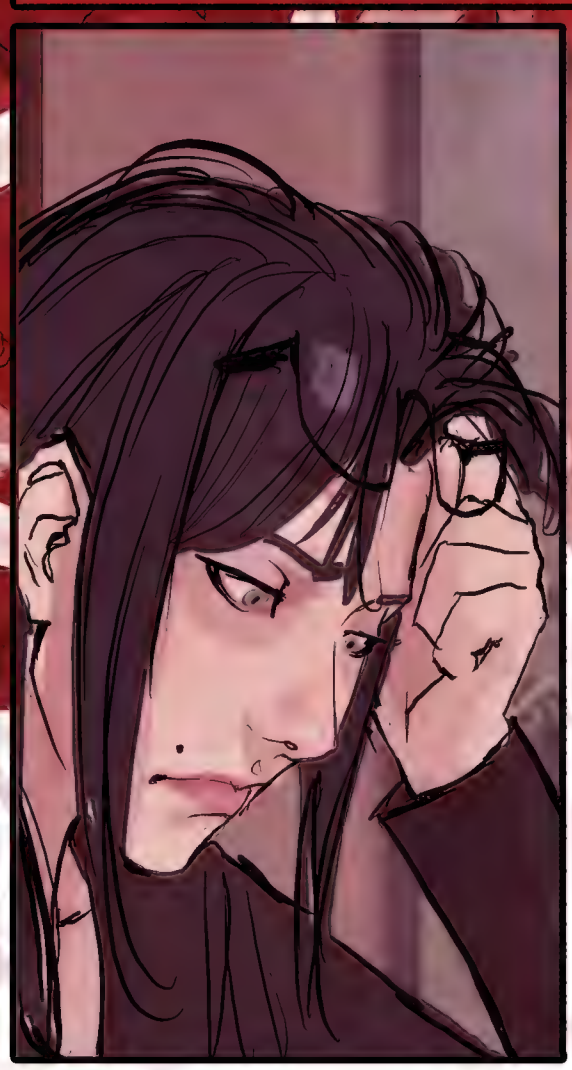

DON'T LAUGH! YOU INTRODUCED ME TO ALL OF THIS, YOU EXPANDED MY HORIZONS AND TURNED MY LIFE INTO AN AMAZING ADVENTURE... I GUESS...WELL, I WANTED TO HELP EXPAND YOURS.
LIKE I SAID...I IDOLIZED YOU! YOU BECAME MY *IDEAL* OF A DOMINATRIX... YOU COULD DO *ANYTHING.*


I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...
WELL, THAT IS HOW I SAW YOU... ALLY!


IT WAS A *SMALL* DETAIL...SOMETHING THAT SHE MIGHT HAVE MISSED OTHERWISE...BUT NOT *THAT* DAY. THANKS TO ANNE, SHE WAS PAYING ATTENTION. THERE WERE SOME THINGS SHE KNEW ABOUT ALLISON FROM MY STORIES. ONE OF THE BIG ONES WAS...
IN MY STORIES, LISBETH *NEVER* CALLED HER *ALLY.*
AT THAT VERY MOMENT, LISBETH WASN'T SPEAKING TO STORY ALLISON. SHE SPOKE TO ALLY, AND ALLY LISTENED!
WELL...ALLY READ IT...*WHATEVER!* YOU GET MY POINT!

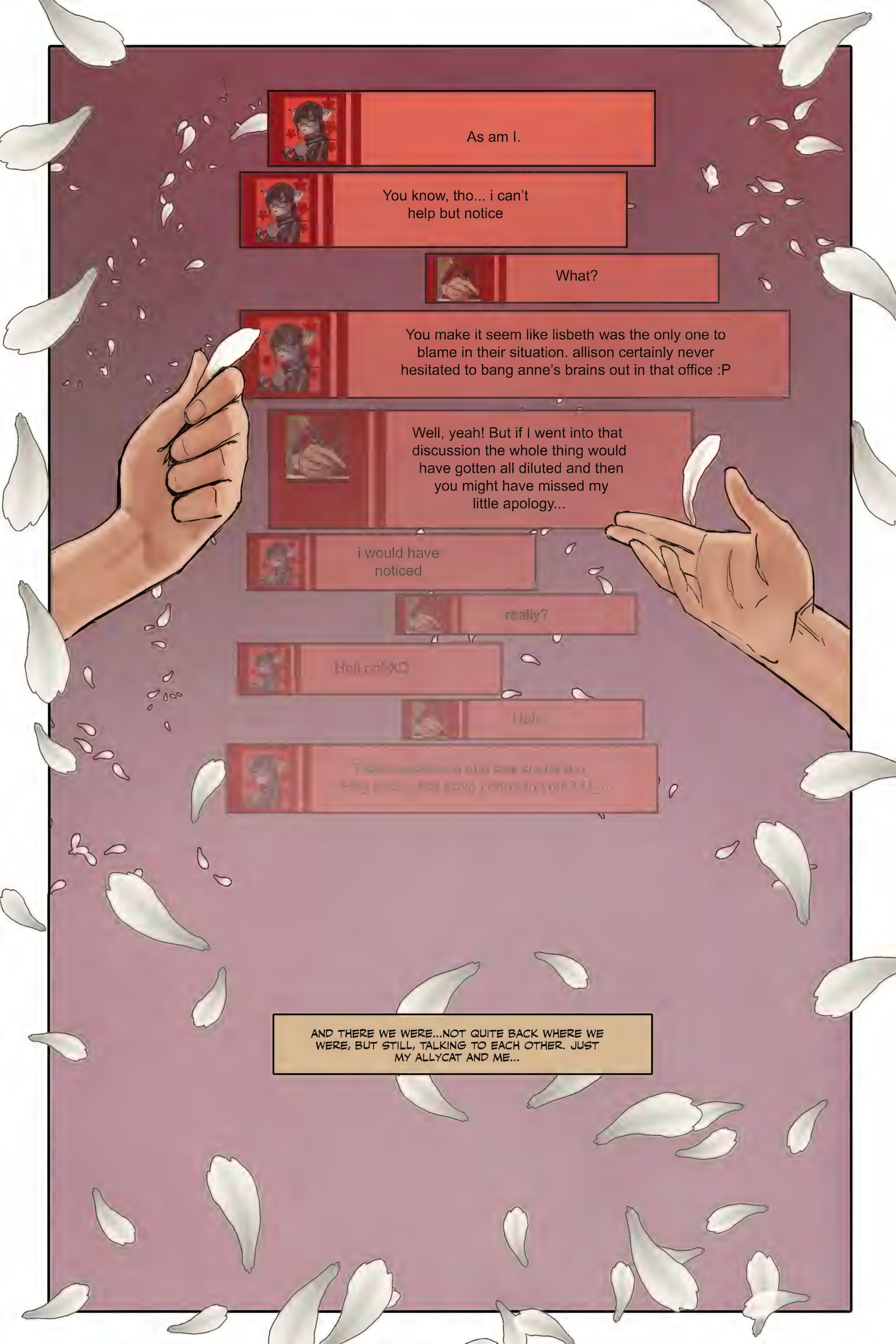
THAT WAS THE REASON I ENCOURAGED THIS IDEA OF ANOTHER SUB...
AND THEN WHEN THE CHANCE APPEARED, WHEN SARAH...NO, WHEN *ANNE* CAME INTO OUR LIVES I *PANICKED.* SHE WAS ATTRACTIVE, ARTISTIC...FUN! AND, LIKE ME, A SEXUAL SUBMISSIVE. I GREW JEALOUS, I FELT SO REPLACEABLE.
AND IN THIS ENVIRONMENT OF MASKS I HID MY JEALOUSY... MY RESENTMENT...
I NOTICED...

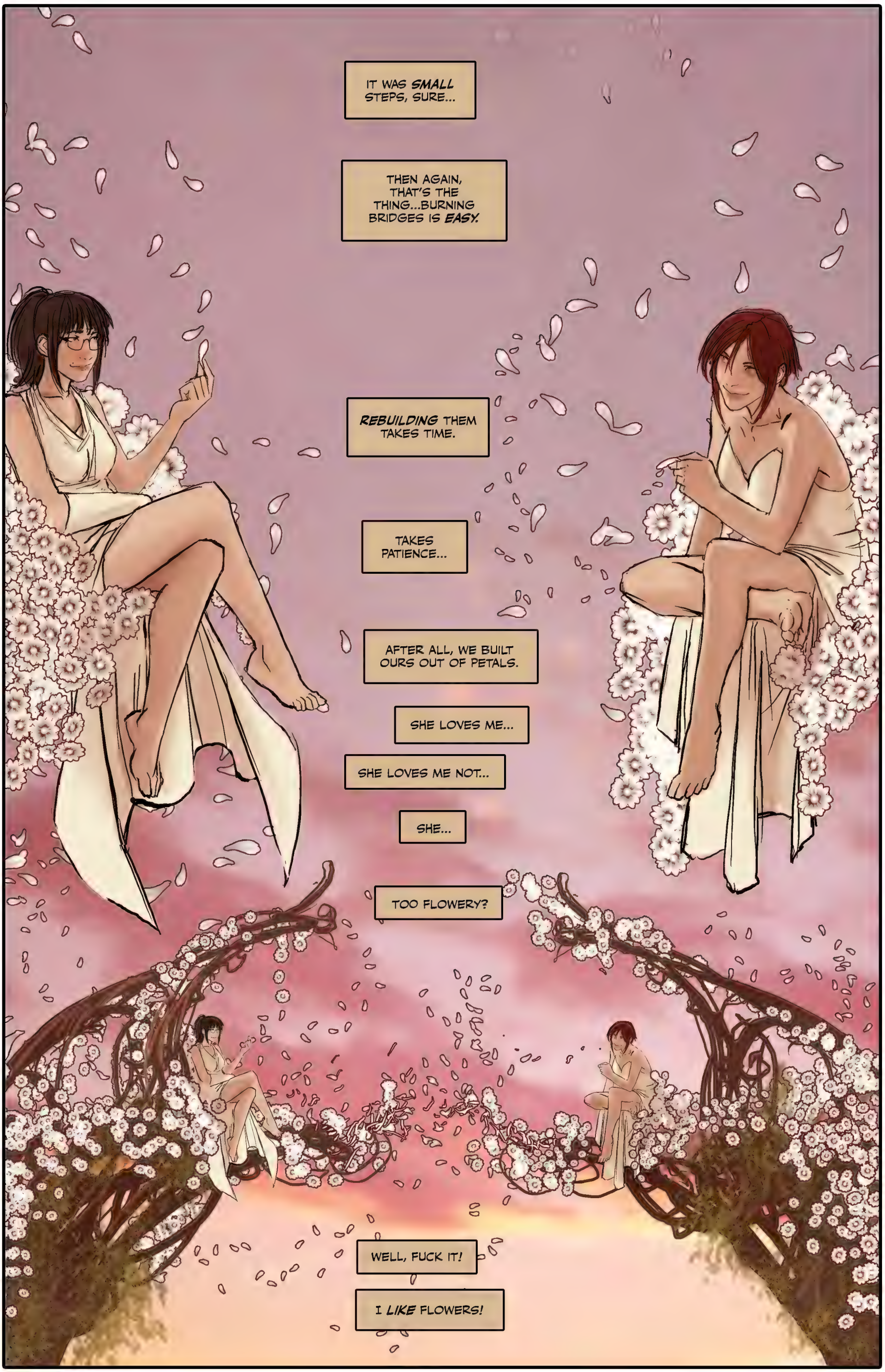

I WAS AN INSECURE, JEALOUS IDIOT. I AM TRULY AND HONESTLY SORRY...ALLY!



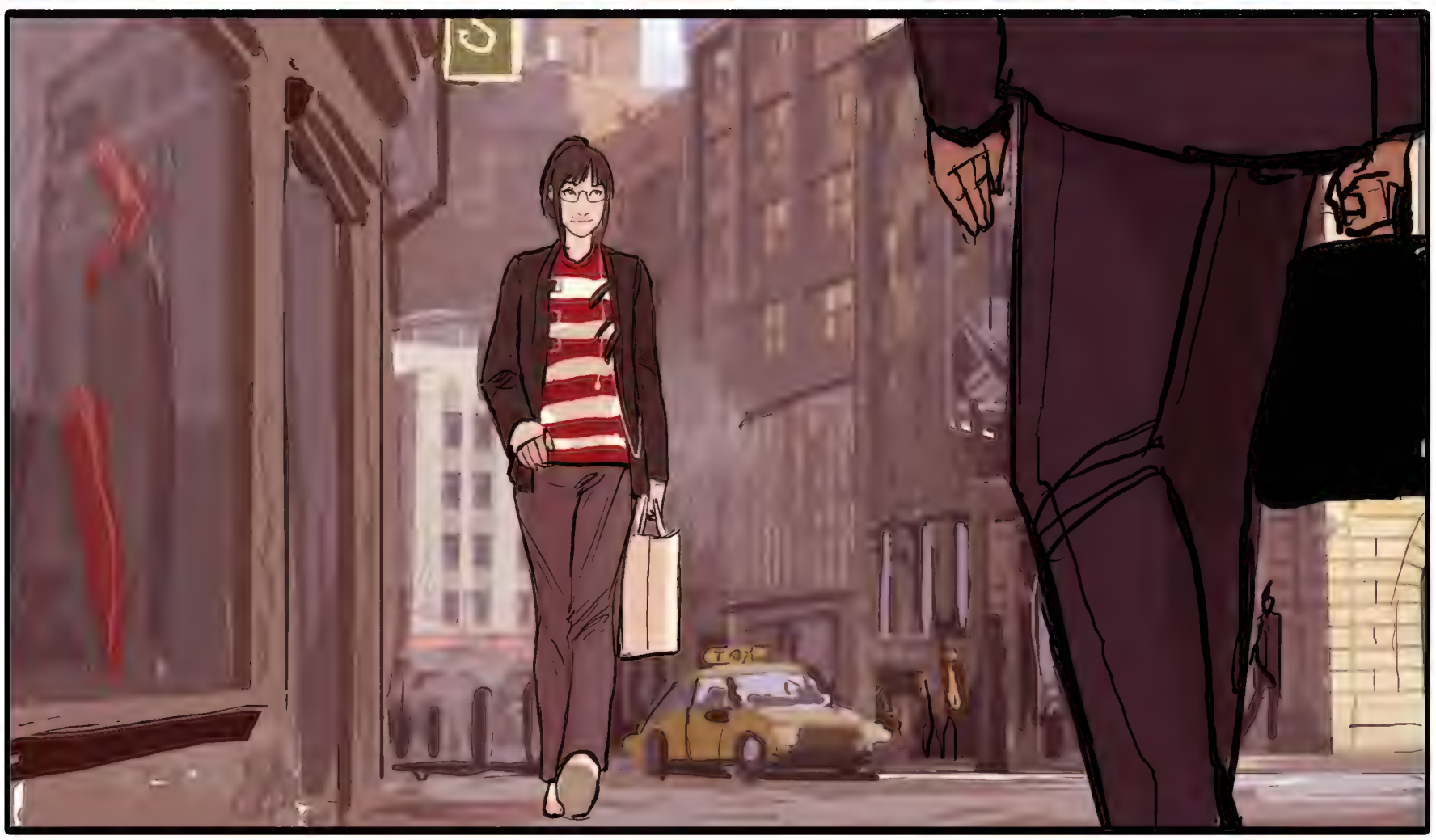
HEH... SONOFA-BITCH!

I read your newest story....
And?
That apology felt sincere.
It was
You picked up on it, huh?
I'm smart like that, heh...
I never had the chance to tell you this, Ally, but i truly am sorry for my part.


As am I.
You know, tho... i can't help but notice
What?
You make it seem like lisbeth was the only one to blame in their situation. allison certainly never hesitated to bang anne's brains out in that office :P
Well, yeah! But if I went into that discussion the whole thing would have gotten all diluted and then you might have missed my little apology...
i would have noticed
really?
AND THERE WE WERE...NOT QUITE BACK WHERE WE WERE, BUT STILL, TALKING TO EACH OTHER. JUST MY ALLYCAT AND ME...

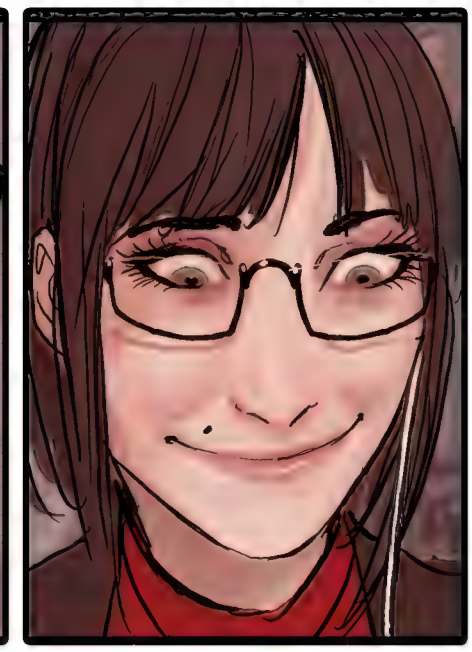

IT WAS SMALL STEPS, SURE...
THEN AGAIN, THAT'S THE THING...BURNING BRIDGES IS EASY.
REBUILDING THEM TAKES TIME.
TAKES PATIENCE...
AFTER ALL, WE BUILT OURS OUT OF PETALS.
SHE LOVES ME...
SHE LOVES ME NOT...
SHE...
TOO FLOWERY?
WELL, FUCK IT!
I LIKE FLOWERS!

I SUBMITTED THE SECOND OF THE FIVE STORIES ON DECEMBER SIXTH. FOUR DAYS BEFORE MY BIRTHDAY, IN FACT.



BI-BLIP

Anne:
She uploaded a new story!



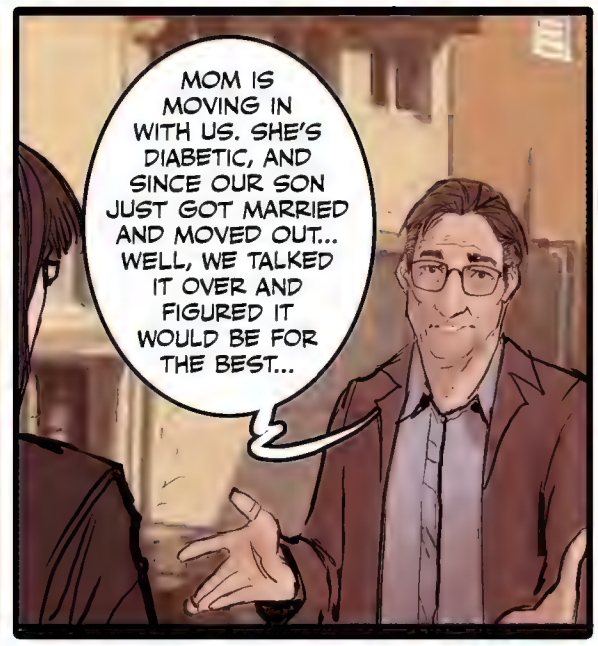
KEEP THE CHANGE!

CAREFUL!
?

HEY, EXCUSE ME! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MRS. KRAMER'S STUFF?

OH, HEY! UH, YOU ARE *ALICE*, RIGHT?
ALLISON! UH, HOW DID YOU...
SHE TOLD US ALL ABOUT YOU! SAID YOU LOOK A LOT LIKE OUR NIECE, BETHANY, JUST *LESS* PIERCED!

BOB KRAMER, PLEASURE TO MEET YOU!
OH, SO YOU'RE HER... UH?
SON!
AH! UM, SO WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?


MOM IS MOVING IN WITH US. SHE'S DIABETIC, AND SINCE OUR SON JUST GOT MARRIED AND MOVED OUT... WELL, WE TALKED IT OVER AND FIGURED IT WOULD BE FOR THE BEST...

SO HERE I AM, PICKING UP THE *IMPORTANT* STUFF. SHE'LL COME BACK FOR THE *BIG* MOVE.

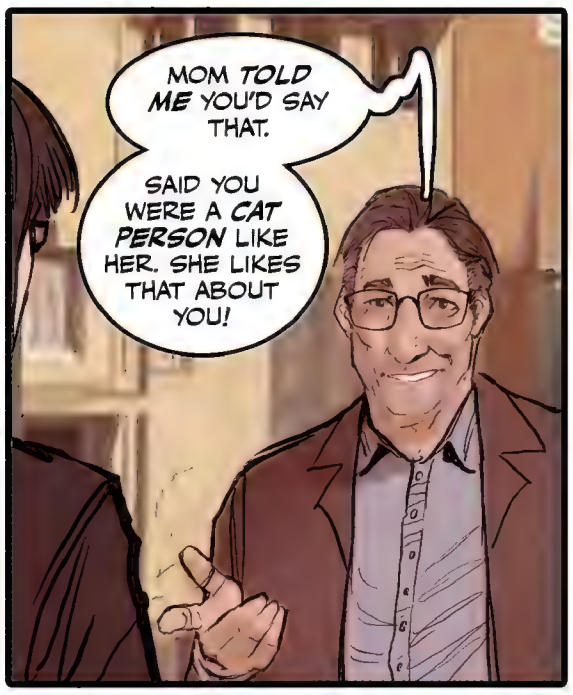
BUT YES! SPEAKING OF THE IMPORTANT STUFF, I ACTUALLY WANTED TO DROP BY.
OH, RIGHT! SHE'LL WANT MR. BONKERS BACK.

UH..YES. WELL, ACTUALLY, WE'RE TAKING BONKERS TO THE PET SHELTER. MOLLY, MY WIFE, IS ALLERGIC TO CATS, SO...

OH...
...

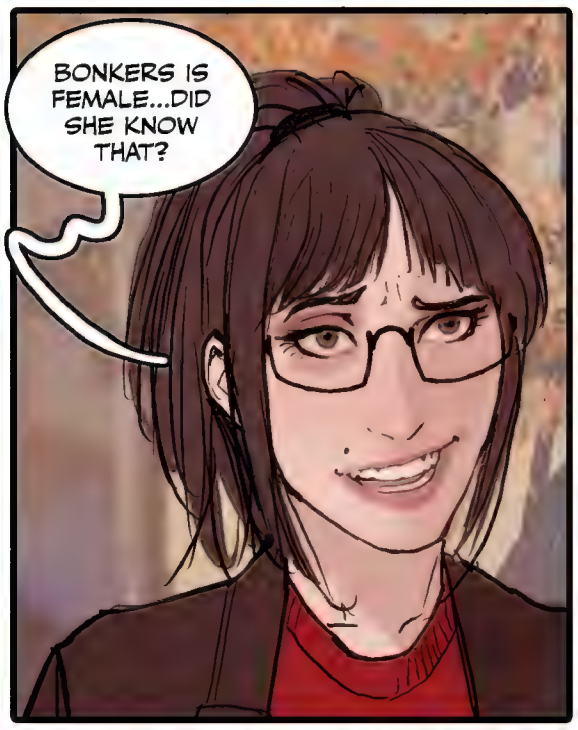
I'LL TAKE HER!

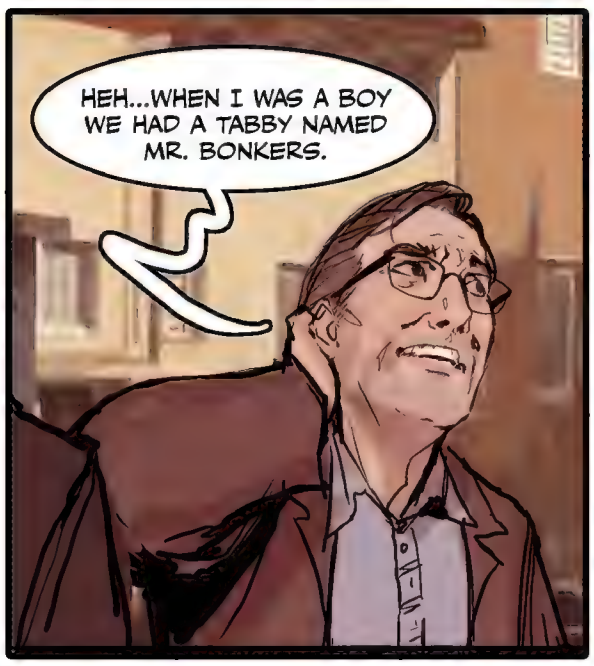
HEH...
HAHAHAHHAH
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?


MOM TOLD ME YOU'D SAY THAT.
SAID YOU WERE A CAT PERSON LIKE HER. SHE LIKES THAT ABOUT YOU!

WELL...GUESS THAT'S SETTLED, THEN.

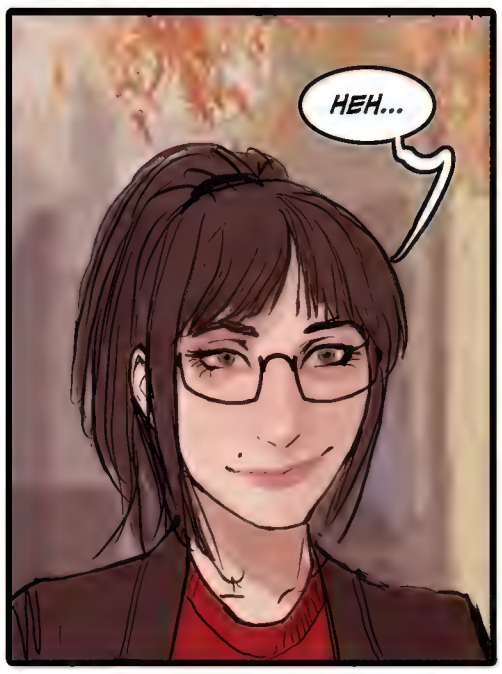
OH...ONE THING!
YES?


BONKERS IS FEMALE...DID SHE KNOW THAT?


HEH...WHEN I WAS A BOY WE HAD A TABBY NAMED MR. BONKERS.

IT DIED... WE GOT ANOTHER ONE... NAMED IT THE SAME...

I GUESS IT BECAME A TRADITION.
I THINK THIS ONE IS TECHNICALLY MR. BONKERS THE FOURTH!


HEH...

CAN YOU WAIT HERE FOR LIKE, FIVE MINUTES?

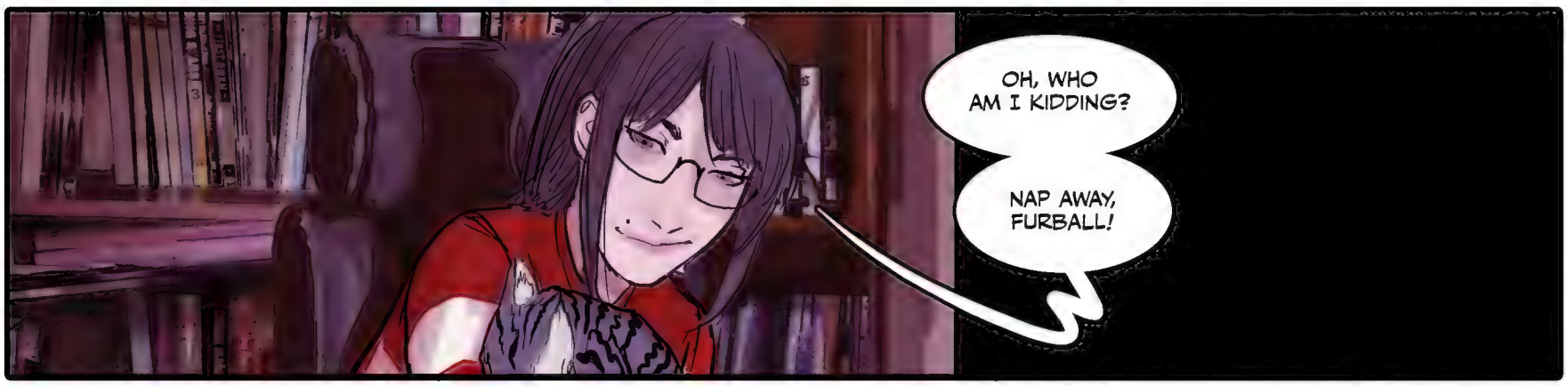
HUH? OH, YEAH! SURE! THIS WILL TAKE A WHILE, ANYWAY.

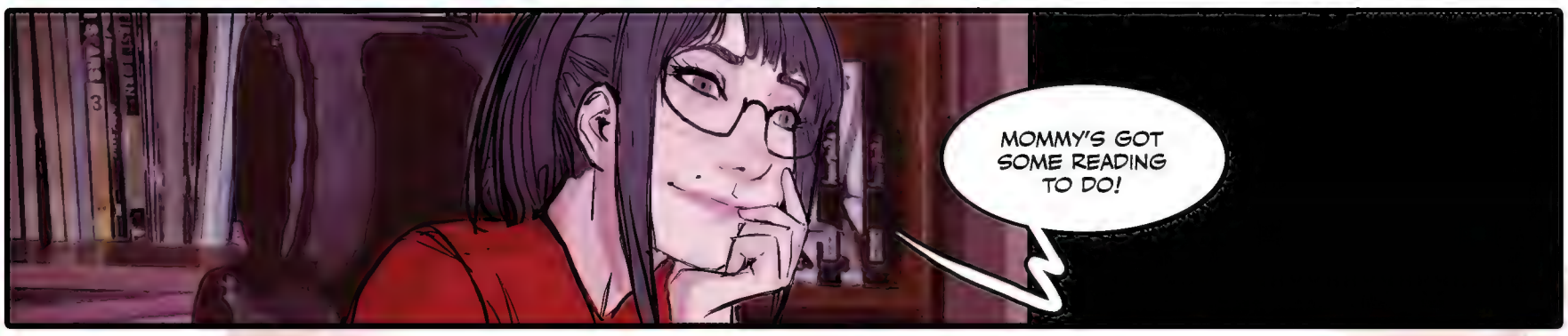
HERE YOU GO! GIVE THIS TO MRS. KRAMER!
TELL HER I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF BONKERS. I'D HAVE WRITTEN THAT ON THE PHOTO, BUT... BUSTED ARM AND ALL THAT.
HEH...SHE'LL APPRECIATE IT! THANK YOU!
WELCOME! I'LL BE OFF, THEN. GOOD LUCK WITH THE MOVE!

SO...GUESS YOU'LL BE STAYING, HUH?

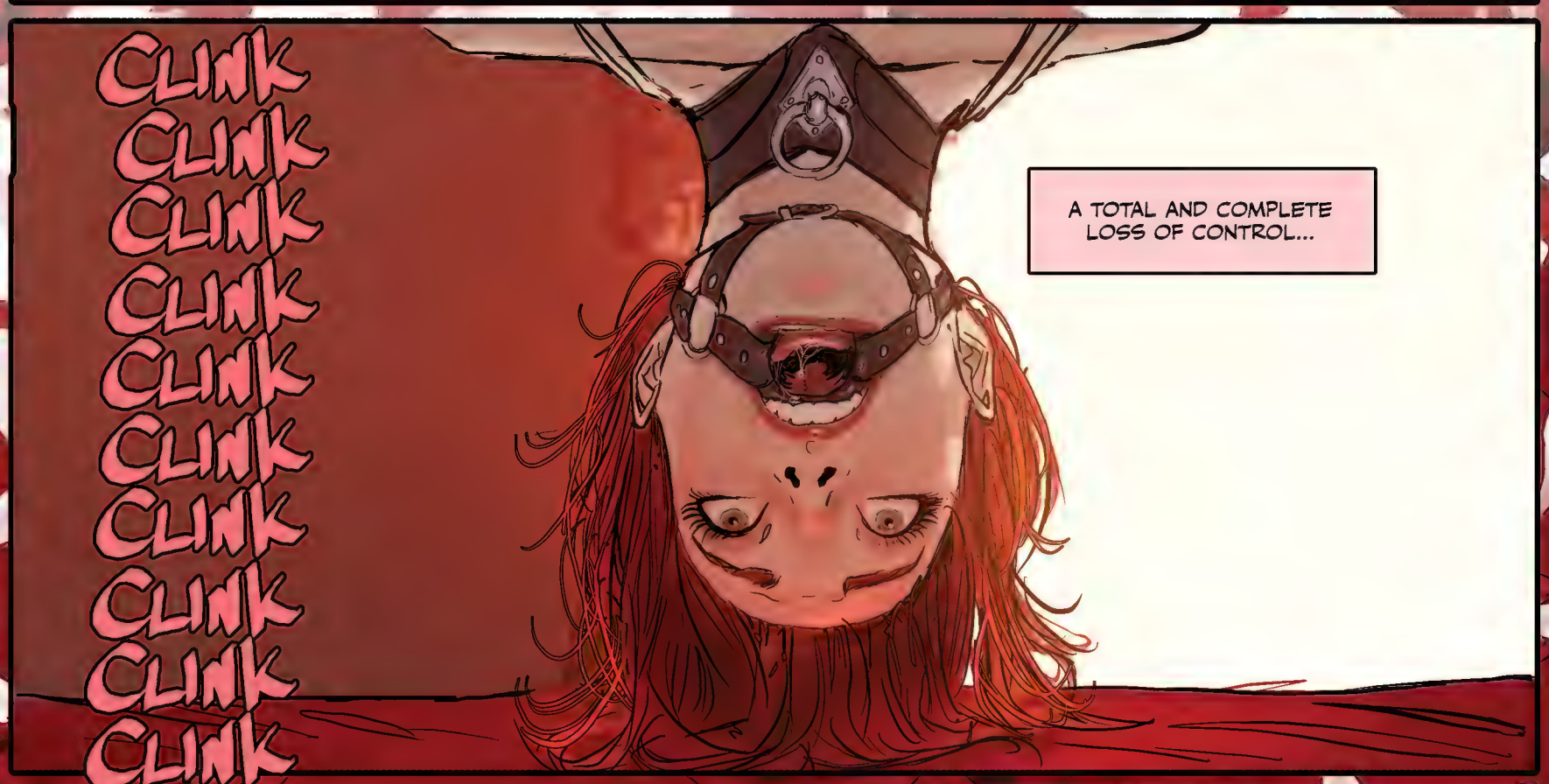
HEH...

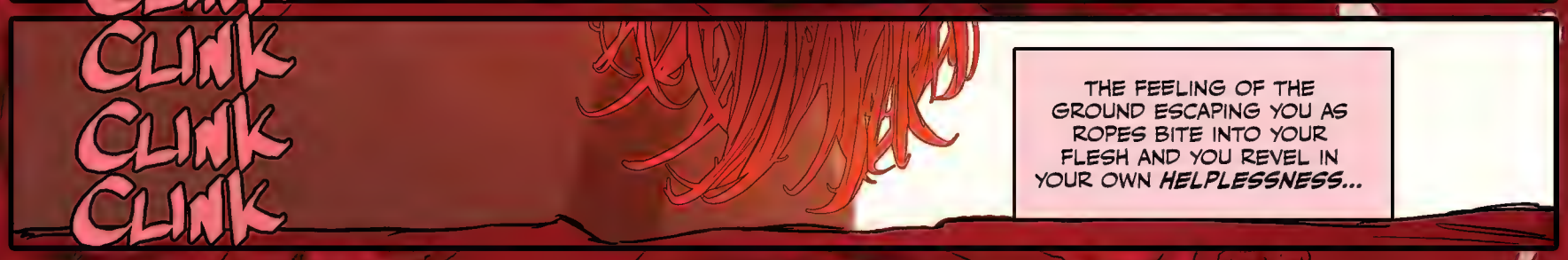
WELL, MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!





MY APPRECIATION





I GUESS THAT WAS WHY I WAS UTTERLY FASCINATED BY THE IDEA OF *SUSPENSION* BONDAGE.
MAYBE SHE FELT A BIT SORRY ABOUT THE BRUISES SHE INFLICTED THE LAST TIME...
BUT THE SECOND DAY AFTER ANNE LEFT, ALLISON DECIDED TO FULFILL THIS DESIRE OF MINE.
IT WAS HOT, INTENSE, AND A BIT EMBARRASSING. I REMEMBER THINKING: *"SHIT! I'LL END UP DROOLING ALL OVER HER LIKE THIS!"*

BUT EVEN WHEN I DID, SHE JUST GRINNED.

STILL, EVEN IN MY PREDICAMENT, I NOTICED SOMETHING ABOUT HER SMILE. SHE MAY HAVE LEARNED THE LANGUAGE OF MY BODY OVER TIME, BUT I LEARNED A THING OR TWO ABOUT HER ***SMILES...***

THEY WERE WRY...

SEDUCTIVE...

AND, DEPENDING ON SITUATION, ***SADISTIC.***

BUT WHEN SOMETHING BOTHERED HER...

THEY NEVER TOUCHED HER EYES.

THEN AGAIN I COULD'VE BEEN WRONG...I MEAN, EVERY TIME I LOOKED AT HER FACE, I ENDED UP DROOLING ALL OVER HER BECAUSE OF THE RING GAG. THEN SHE MOCKED ME FOR IT...

I'LL ADMIT, MY THOUGHTS DWELLED ON HER LOOK VERY BRIEFLY. YOU CAN ONLY HANG ON TO RATIONAL THOUGHTS FOR SO LONG BEFORE YOU ARE REDUCED TO A PILE OF ORGASMIC MESS.

THE WEEK THAT ANNE WAS AWAY, I FELT PAMPERED. ALSO ***BRUISED***, BUT MOSTLY PAMPERED.

SHE TOOK ME TO PERFORMANCES, MEETUPS, MUNCHES...

AND IT WAS DURING ONE OF THESE PERFORMANCES, I LEARNED THE TRUTH BEHIND HER LOOK.

HEY KARA! DID YOU SEE ALLISON? I SWEAR SHE WAS HERE LIKE A SECOND AGO!

OH, SHE'LL BE BACK. SHE ALWAYS AVOIDS THESE SUSPENSION ACTS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN ***AVOIDS***?

INTENSELY DISLIKES AND DISTANCES HERSELF FROM THEM?

REALLY? SHE DID IT WITH ME!

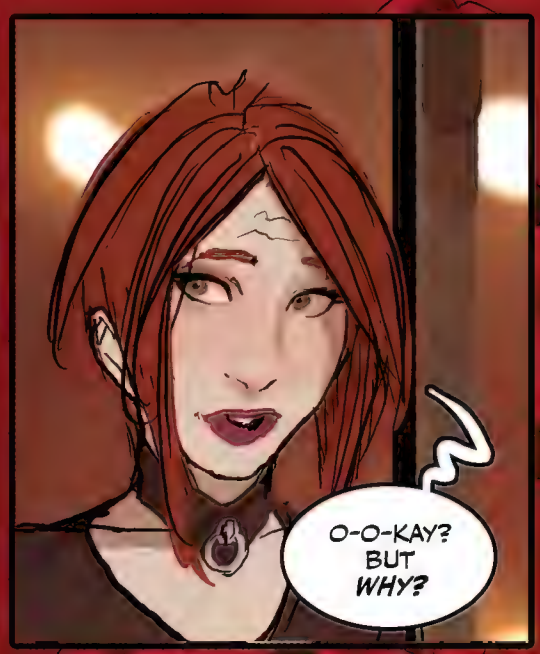
YOU DON'T SAY?

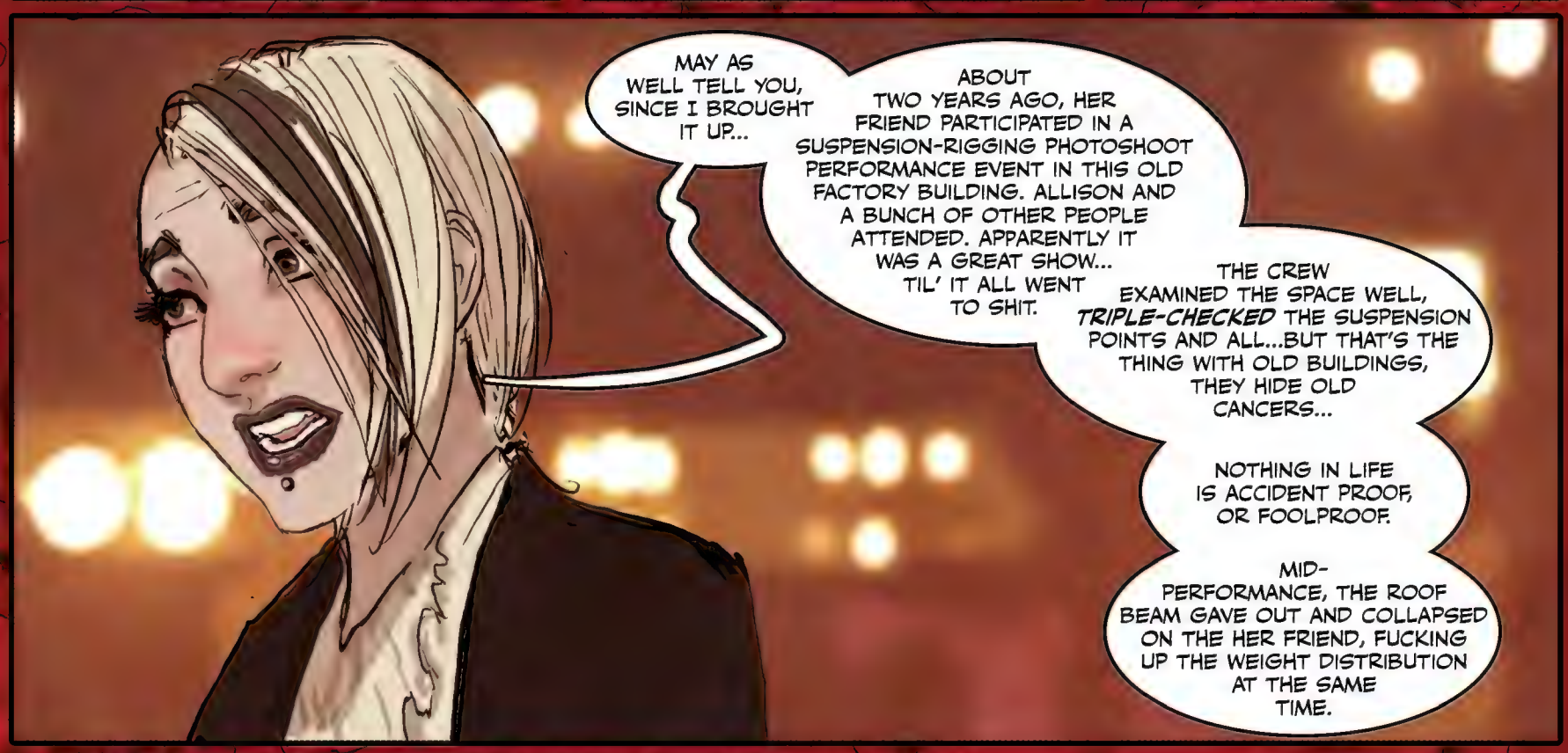
WHAT'S WITH THE SURPRISED LOOK?

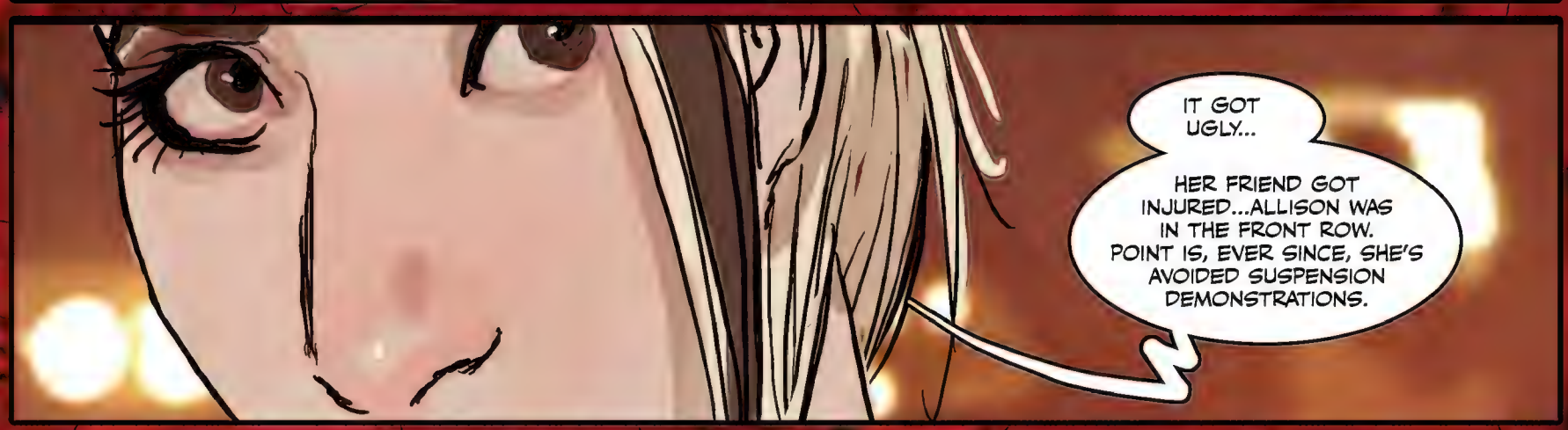
SHE'S AN ***AMAZING*** DOMME.

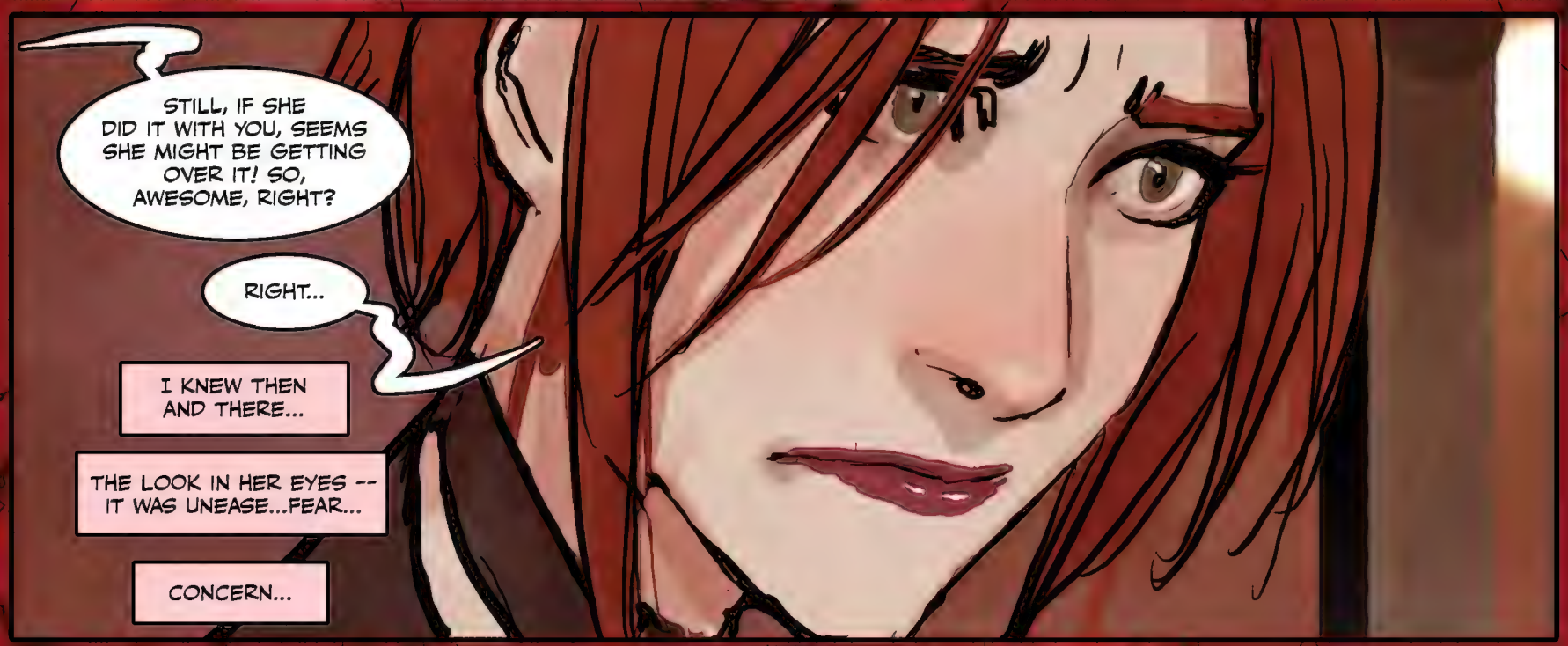
NO-NO, I DON'T *DOUBT* IT...IT'S JUST, I'VE KNOWN HER FOR YEARS.

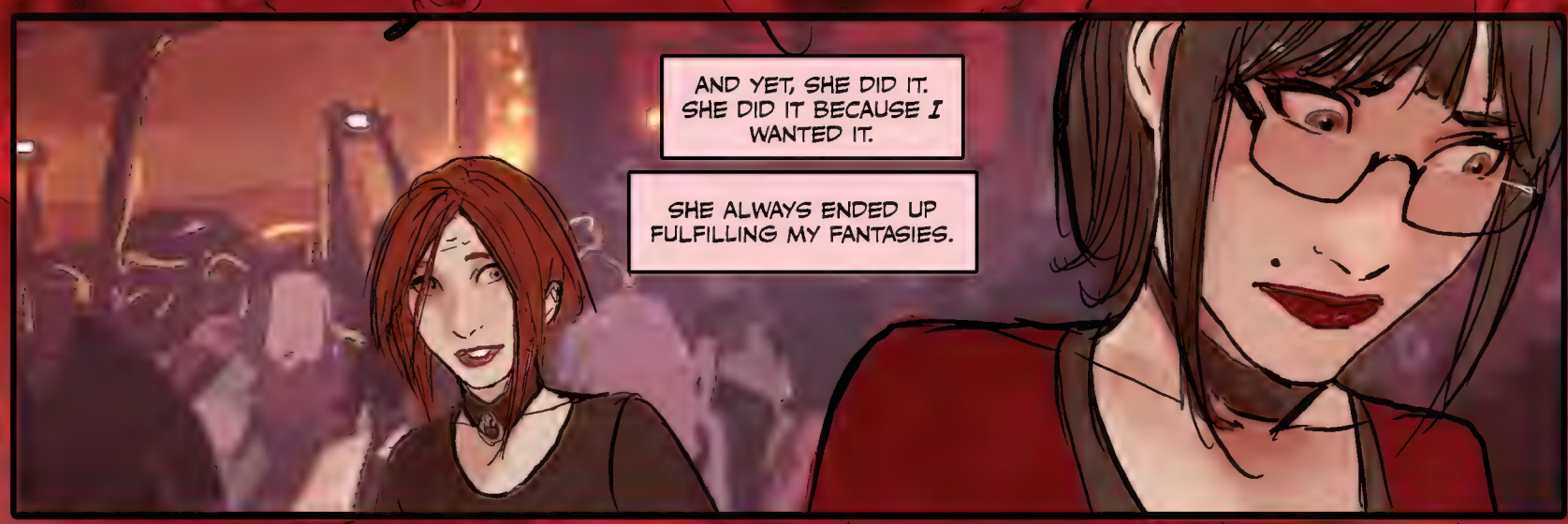
SHE IS... WELL, SHE *WAS* SQUEAMISH ABOUT SUSPENSION STUFF...

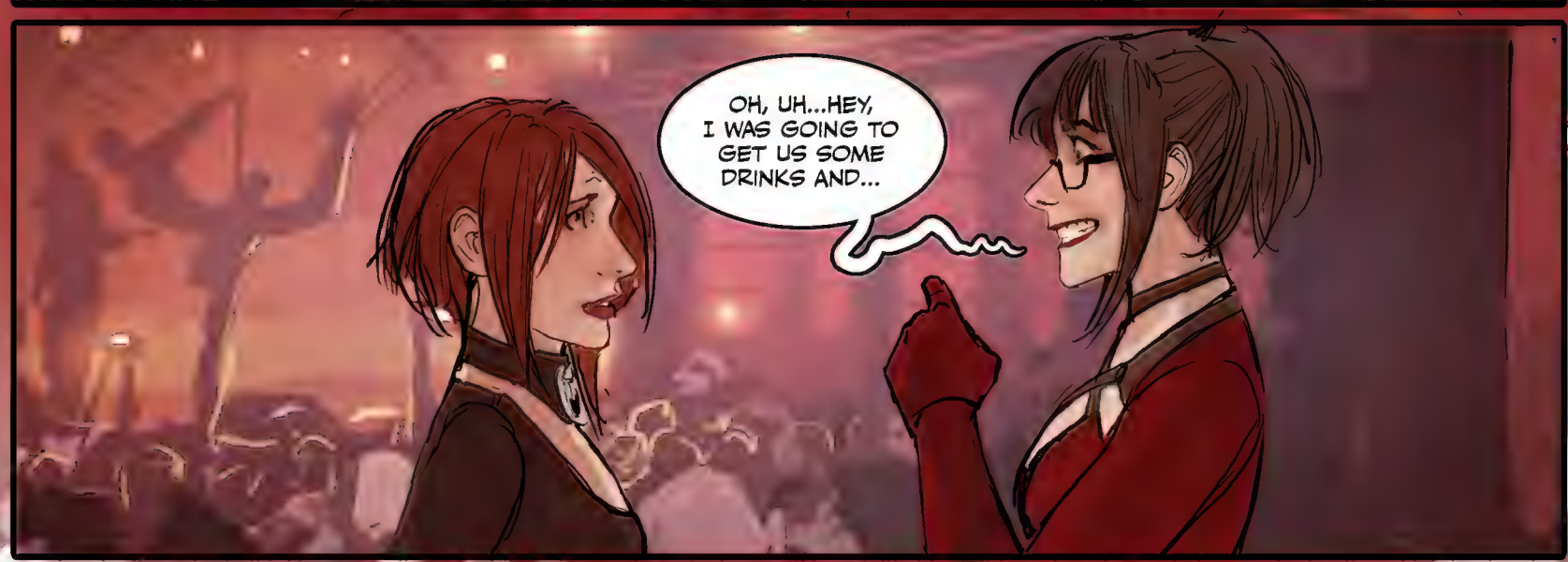

O-O-KAY? BUT *WHY?*

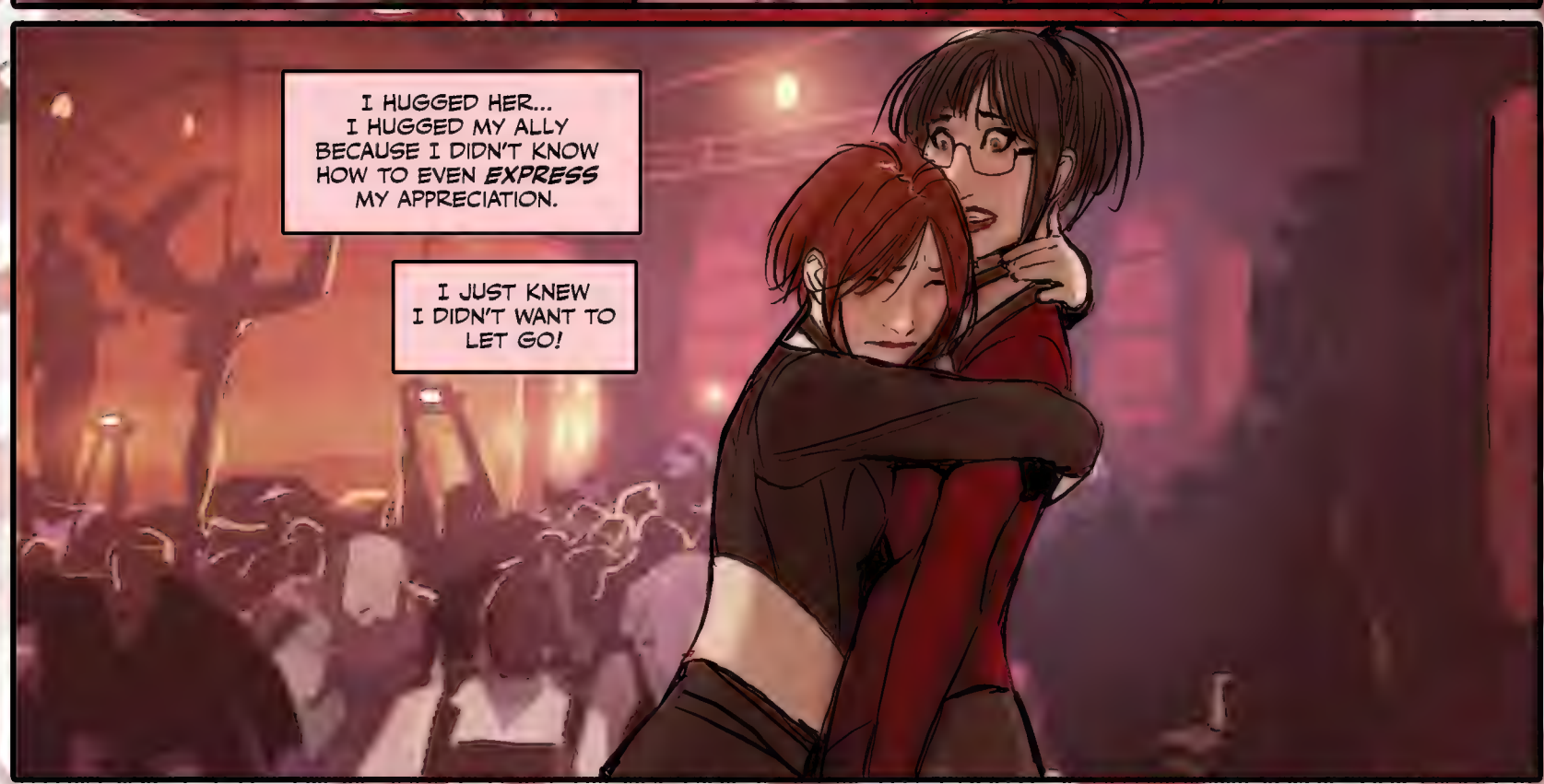

MAY AS WELL TELL YOU, SINCE I BROUGHT IT UP...
ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, HER FRIEND PARTICIPATED IN A SUSPENSION-RIGGING PHOTOSHOOT PERFORMANCE EVENT IN THIS OLD FACTORY BUILDING. ALLISON AND A BUNCH OF OTHER PEOPLE ATTENDED. APPARENTLY IT WAS A GREAT SHOW... TIL' IT ALL WENT TO SHIT.
THE CREW EXAMINED THE SPACE WELL, *TRIPLE-CHECKED* THE SUSPENSION POINTS AND ALL...BUT THAT'S THE THING WITH OLD BUILDINGS, THEY HIDE OLD CANCERS...
NOTHING IN LIFE IS ACCIDENT PROOF, OR FOOLPROOF.
MID-PERFORMANCE, THE ROOF BEAM GAVE OUT AND COLLAPSED ON THE HER FRIEND, FUCKING UP THE WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION AT THE SAME TIME.

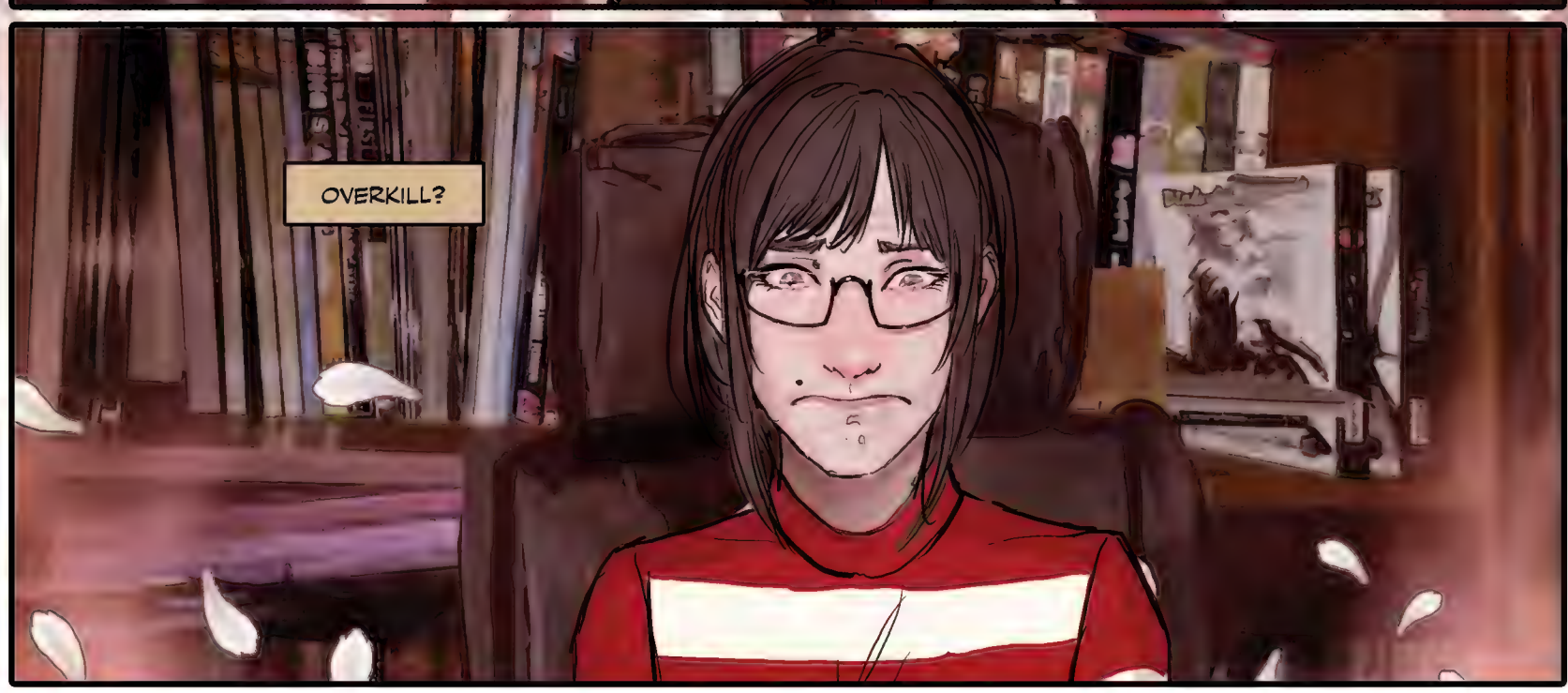

IT GOT UGLY...
HER FRIEND GOT INJURED...ALLISON WAS IN THE FRONT ROW. POINT IS, EVER SINCE, SHE'S AVOIDED SUSPENSION DEMONSTRATIONS.

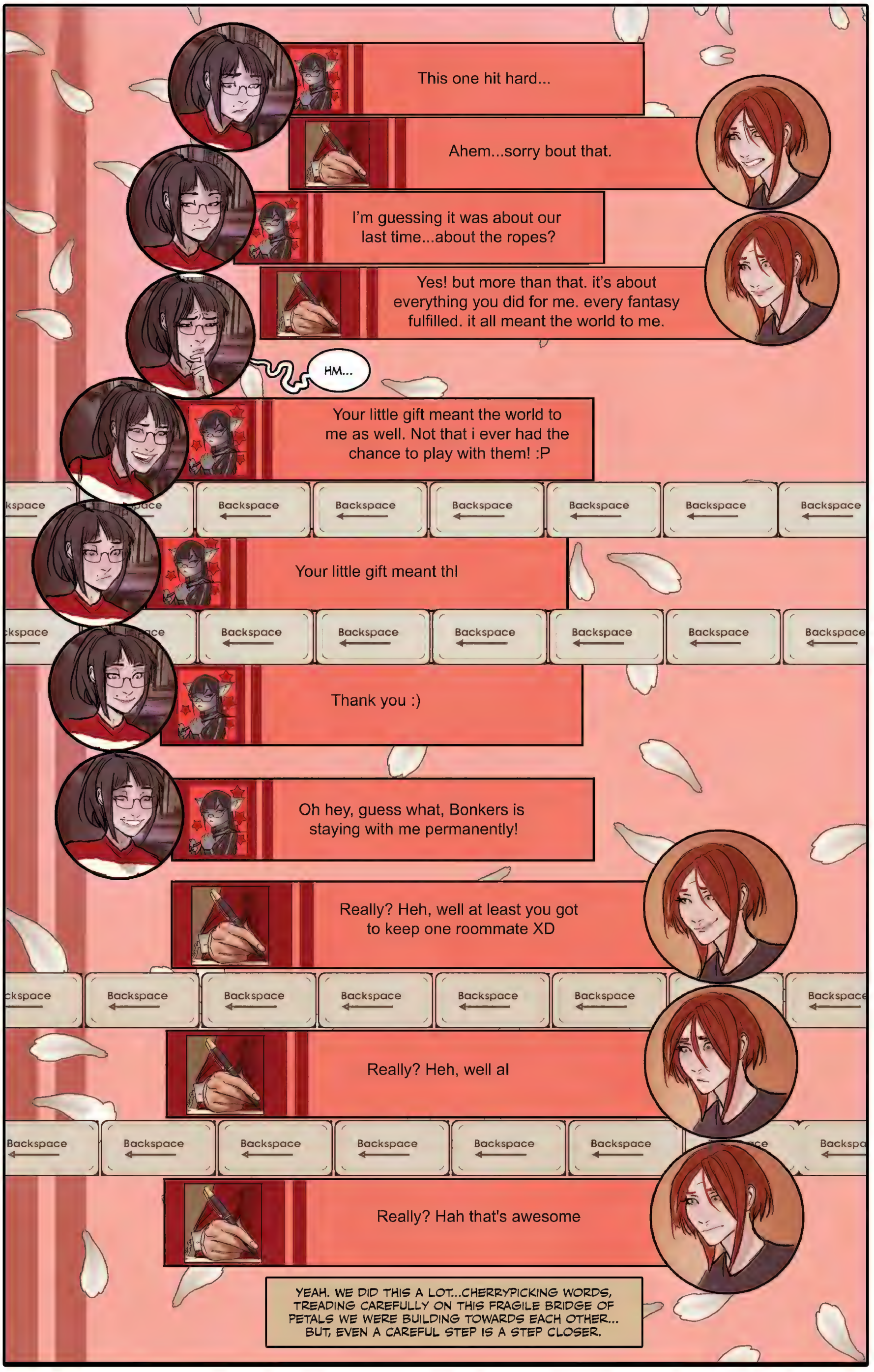

STILL, IF SHE DID IT WITH YOU, SEEMS SHE MIGHT BE GETTING OVER IT! SO, AWESOME, RIGHT?
RIGHT...
I KNEW THEN AND THERE...
THE LOOK IN HER EYES -- IT WAS UNEASE...FEAR...
CONCERN...


AND YET, SHE DID IT. SHE DID IT BECAUSE *I* WANTED IT.
SHE ALWAYS ENDED UP FULFILLING MY FANTASIES.


OH, UH...HEY, I WAS GOING TO GET US SOME DRINKS AND...


I HUGGED HER... I HUGGED MY ALLY BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO EVEN ***EXPRESS*** MY APPRECIATION.
I JUST KNEW I DIDN'T WANT TO LET GO!

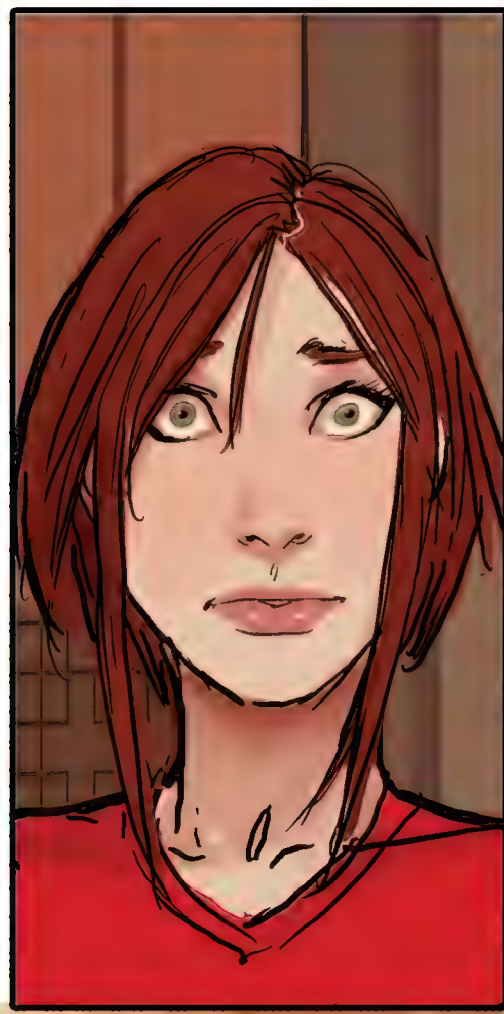

OVERKILL?


This one hit hard...
Ahem...sorry bout that.
I'm guessing it was about our last time...about the ropes?
Yes! but more than that. it's about everything you did for me. every fantasy fulfilled. it all meant the world to me.
HM...
Your little gift meant the world to me as well. Not that i ever had the chance to play with them! :P
Backspace
Your little gift meant thl
Thank you :)
Oh hey, guess what, Bonkers is staying with me permanently!
Really? Heh, well at least you got to keep one roommate XD
Really? Heh, well al
Really? Hah that's awesome
YEAH. WE DID THIS A LOT...CHERRYPICKING WORDS, TREADING CAREFULLY ON THIS FRAGILE BRIDGE OF PETALS WE WERE BUILDING TOWARDS EACH OTHER... BUT, EVEN A CAREFUL STEP IS A STEP CLOSER.

IT WAS DECEMBER TENTH...
MY BIRTHDAY.
DING DONG

JUST A SECOND!

A-ALLY!?
HEY!
AND ALLY TOOK A STEP OF HER OWN.



UMM...SOOO...HAPPY BIRTHDAY?
LINE?

UMM...I HOPED I COULD STUFF IT INTO YOUR MAILBOX...BUT IT WAS TOO LARGE.

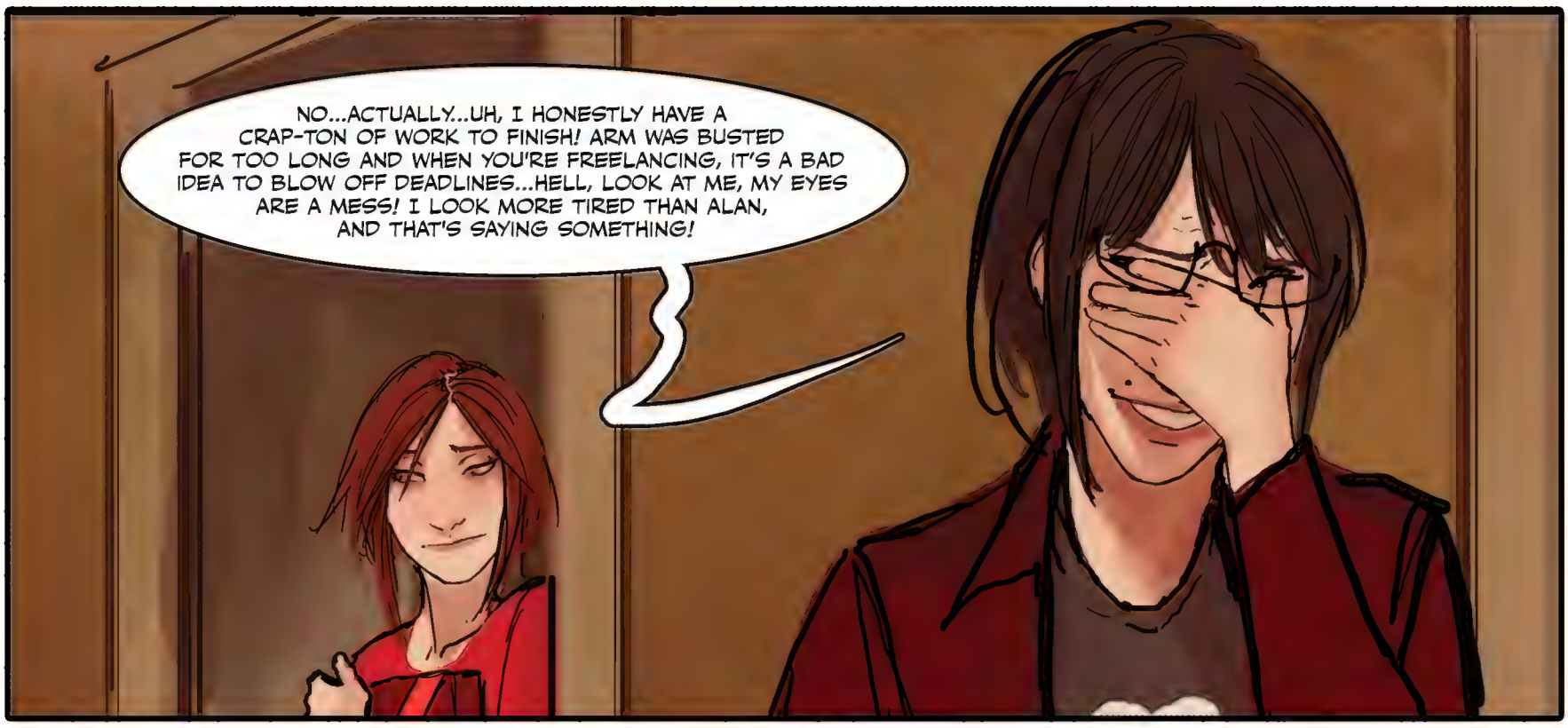
AAAARGH!!! SOMETHING CLEVER! COME OOON!!!

UMM...THAT'S WHAT *HE* SAID?

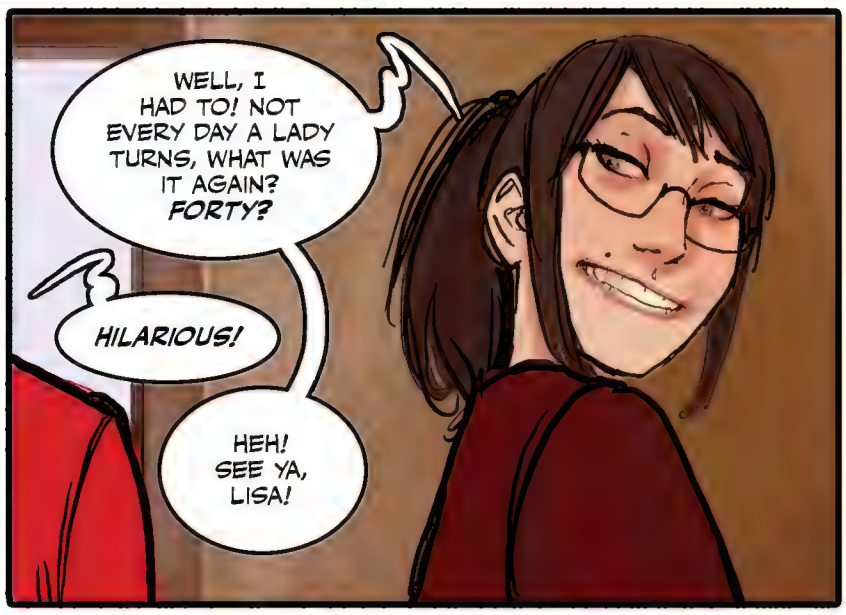
WOW!
I...UH, YEAH...
GOOD THING THAT YOU TOLD ME YOU *PLAN* YOUR STORIES, 'CAUSE YOUR AD-LIBBING *SUCKS!*
HEY! SHAKESPEARE CHOKED AT TIMES TOO! I'M... GUESSING?

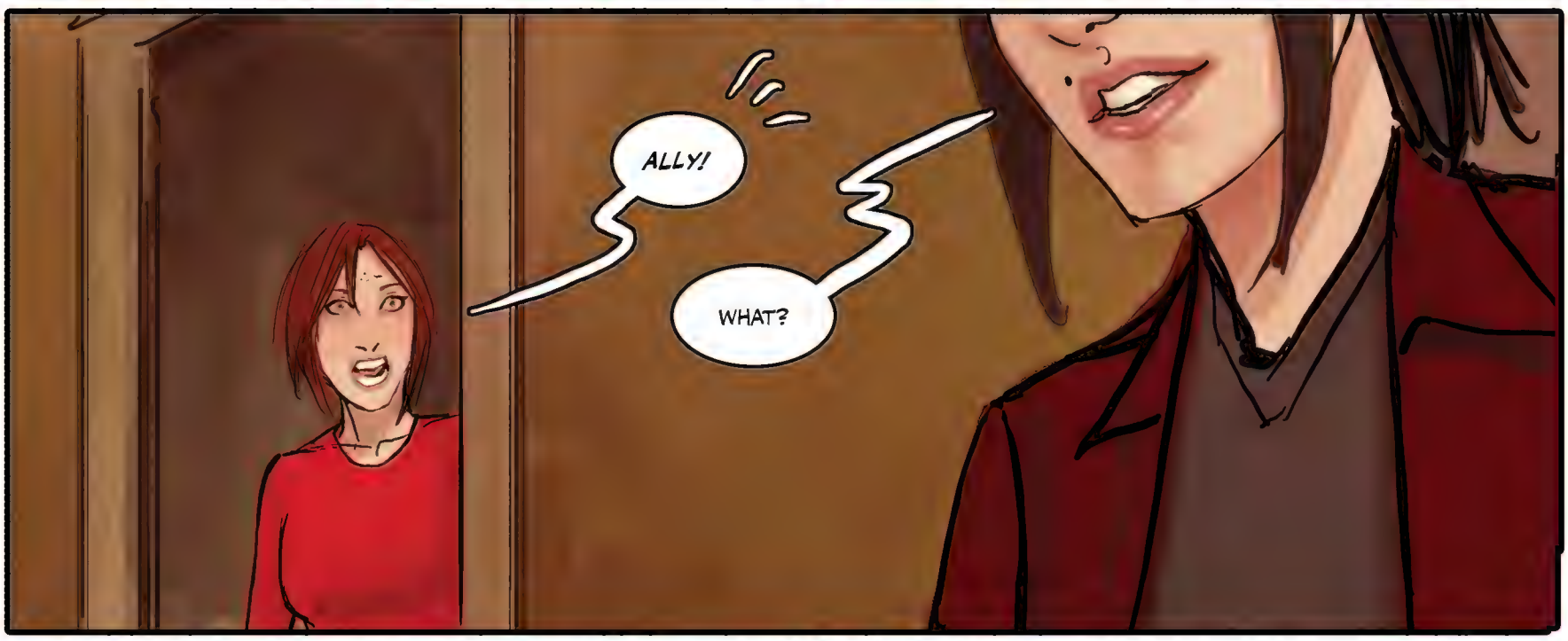
HEH... WELL, ANYWAYS, HERE YOU GO! LIKE I SAID, HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
THANK YOU! SOOO, YOU WANNA COME IN?

NO, I...UM...I JUST WANTED TO GIVE YOU THIS, I DON'T WANT TO BE IN...I DON'T WANT TO INTRUDE.
YOU AREN'T!


NO...ACTUALLY...UH, I HONESTLY HAVE A CRAP-TON OF WORK TO FINISH! ARM WAS BUSTED FOR TOO LONG AND WHEN YOU'RE FREELANCING, IT'S A BAD IDEA TO BLOW OFF DEADLINES...HELL, LOOK AT ME, MY EYES ARE A MESS! I LOOK MORE TIRED THAN ALAN, AND THAT'S SAYING SOMETHING!

AND YET YOU CAME HERE...

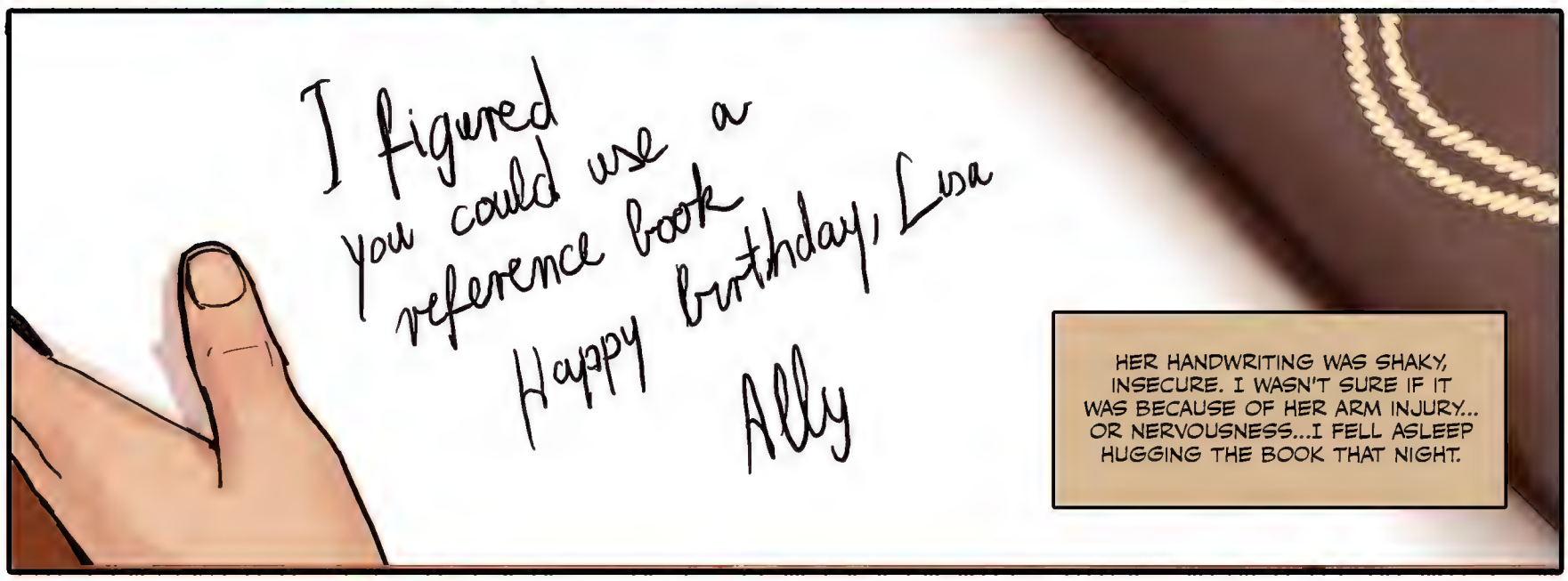

WELL, I HAD TO! NOT EVERY DAY A LADY TURNS, WHAT WAS IT AGAIN? FORTY?
HILARIOUS!
HEH! SEE YA, LISA!

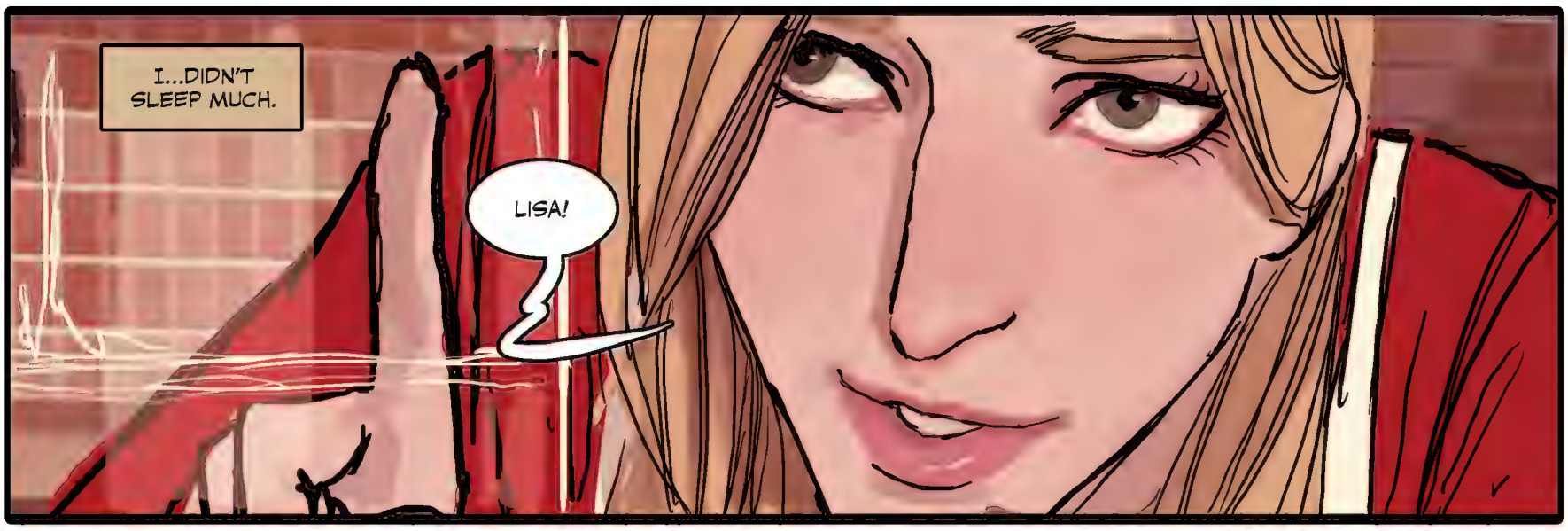

ALLY!
WHAT?

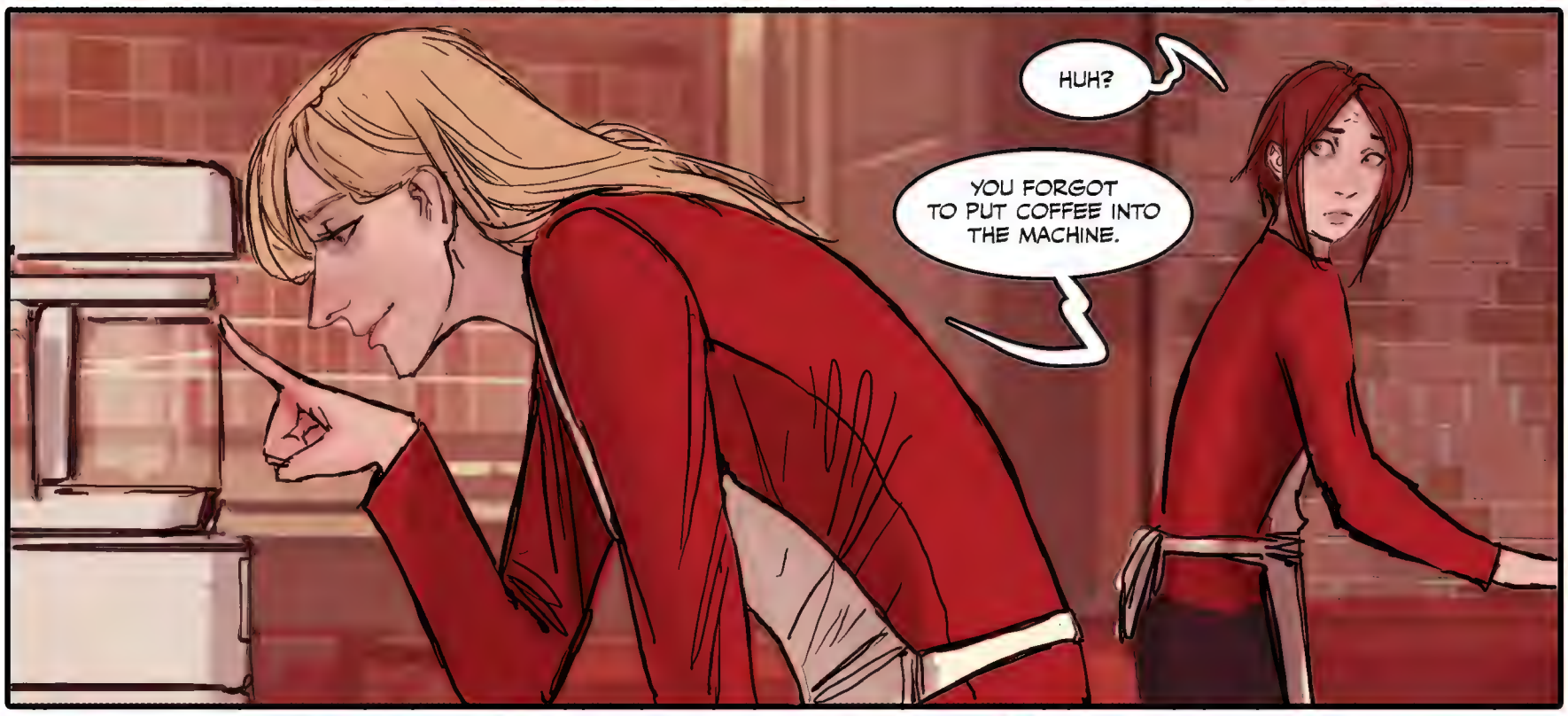
PLEASE... KEEP READING! OKAY?

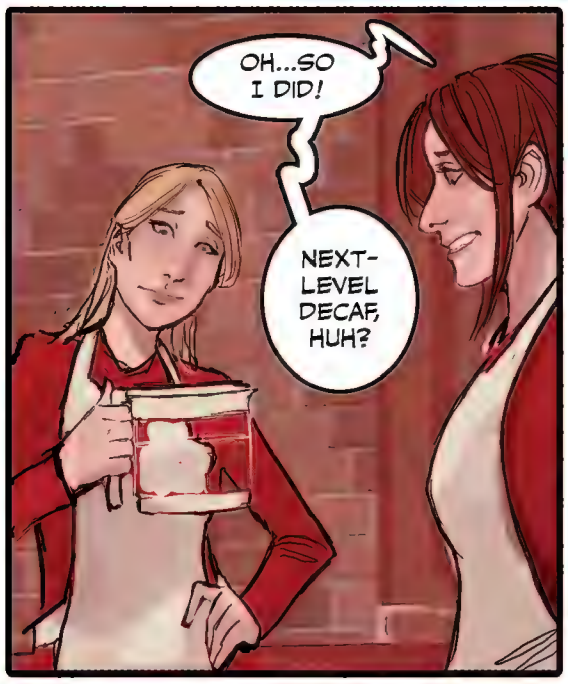
O-OKAY!

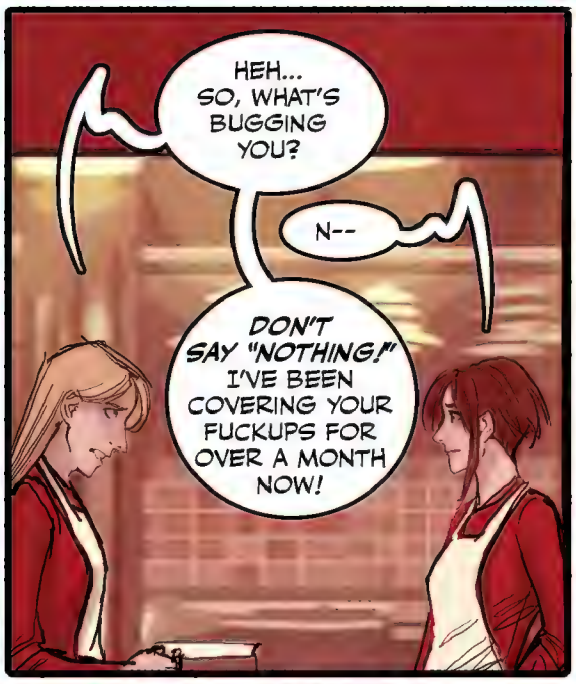
Bound


I figured you could use a reference book
Happy birthday, Lisa
Ally
HER HANDWRITING WAS SHAKY, INSECURE. I WASN'T SURE IF IT WAS BECAUSE OF HER ARM INJURY... OR NERVOUSNESS...I FELL ASLEEP HUGGING THE BOOK THAT NIGHT.


I...DIDN'T SLEEP MUCH.
LISA!

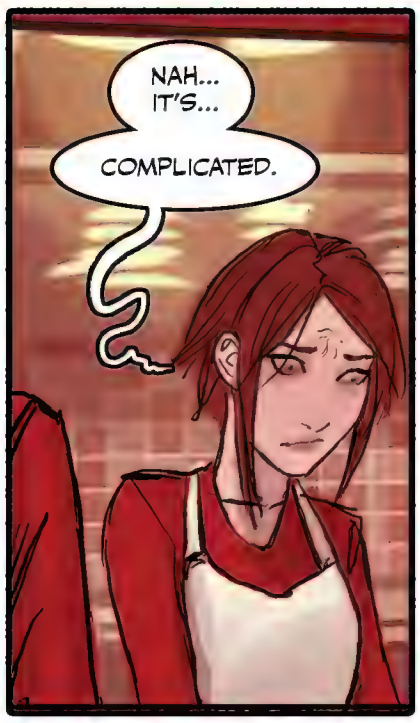

HUH?
YOU FORGOT TO PUT COFFEE INTO THE MACHINE.


OH...SO I DID!
NEXT-LEVEL DECAF, HUH?


HEH... SO, WHAT'S BUGGING YOU?
N--
DON'T SAY "NOTHING!" I'VE BEEN COVERING YOUR FUCKUPS FOR OVER A MONTH NOW!

IT'S NOT A GLAMOROUS JOB, BUT USUALLY YOU ARE GOOD AT IT!
FINE, MISS INSIGHT! IT'S RELATIONSHIP STUFF...

WE OPEN IN TEN MINUTES. WANNA TALK ABOUT IT?


NAH... IT'S...
COMPLICATED.

I'VE HAD COMPLICATED EXPERIENCES.

I DON'T THINK YOU COULD RELATE.

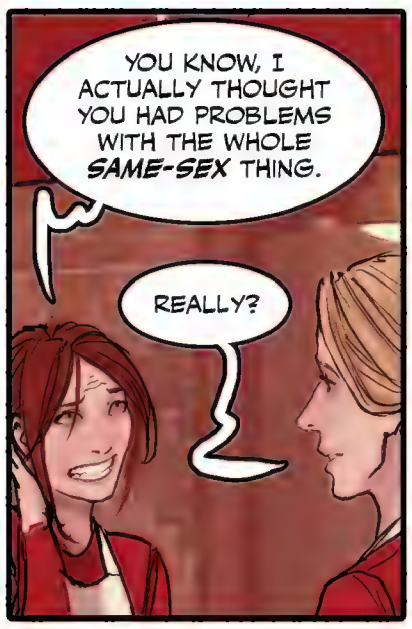
...

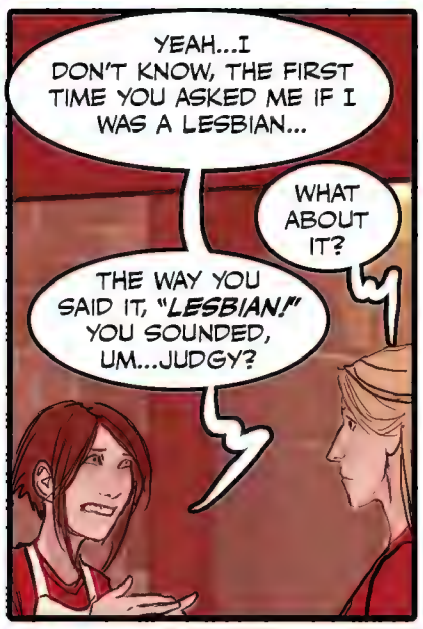
I DON'T MEAN THAT IN A CONDESCENDING WAY, IT'S JUST...

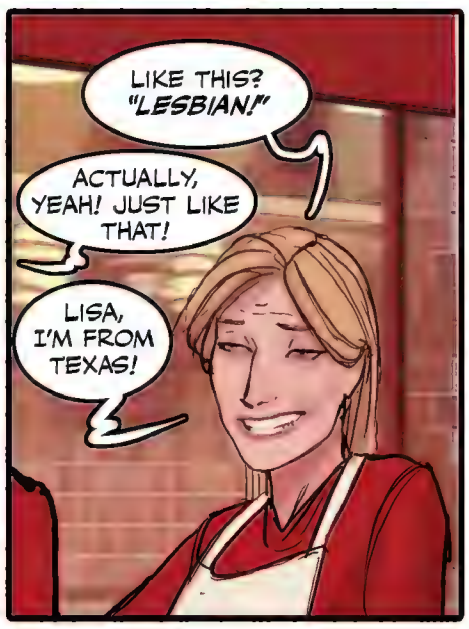
UH-HUH! SAY, DID I EVER SHOW YOU A PHOTO OF MY WIFE?

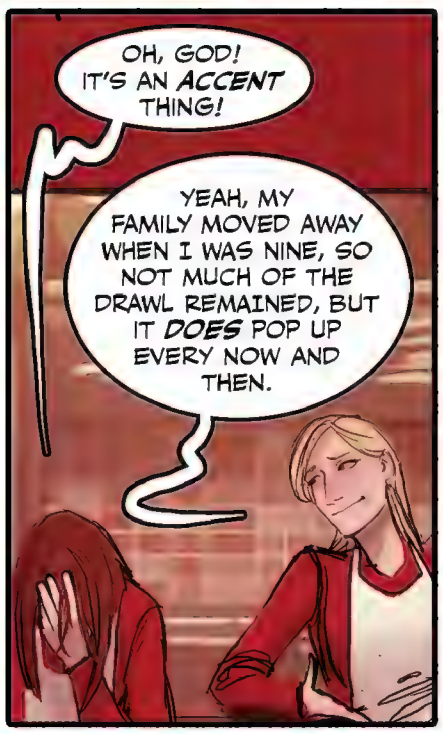
NO... WAIT! YOU'RE...

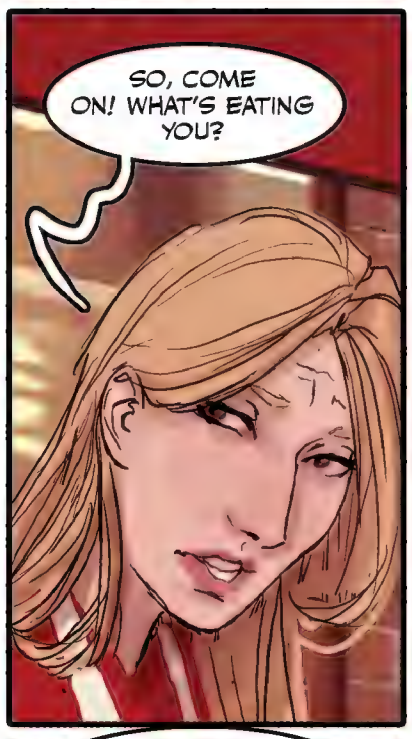
HAPPILY MARRIED!
OH, GOD! I'M A MORON!

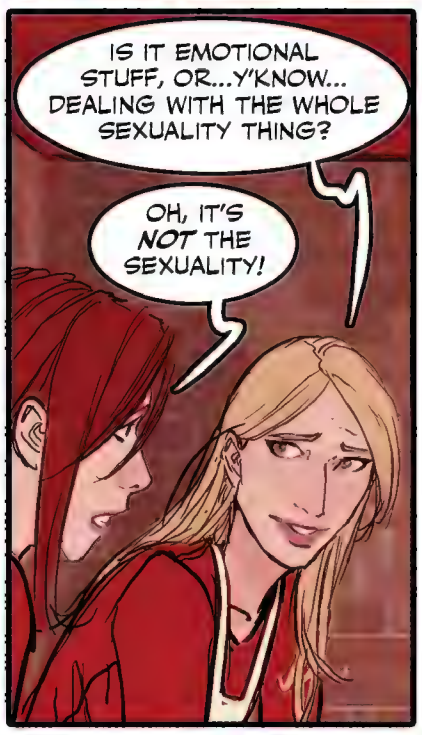

YOU KNOW, I ACTUALLY THOUGHT YOU HAD PROBLEMS WITH THE WHOLE SAME-SEX THING.
REALLY?

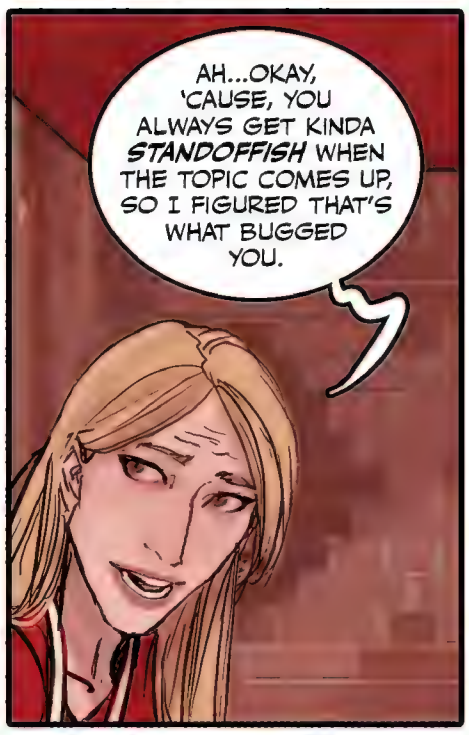

YEAH...I DON'T KNOW, THE FIRST TIME YOU ASKED ME IF I WAS A LESBIAN...
WHAT ABOUT IT?
THE WAY YOU SAID IT, "LESBIAN!" YOU SOUNDED, UM...JUDGY?


LIKE THIS? "LESBIAN!"
ACTUALLY, YEAH! JUST LIKE THAT!
LISA, I'M FROM TEXAS!

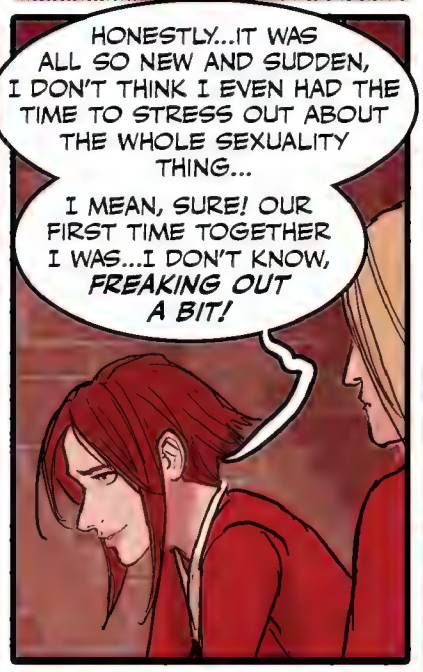

OH, GOD! IT'S AN ACCENT THING!
YEAH, MY FAMILY MOVED AWAY WHEN I WAS NINE, SO NOT MUCH OF THE DRAWL REMAINED, BUT IT DOES POP UP EVERY NOW AND THEN.

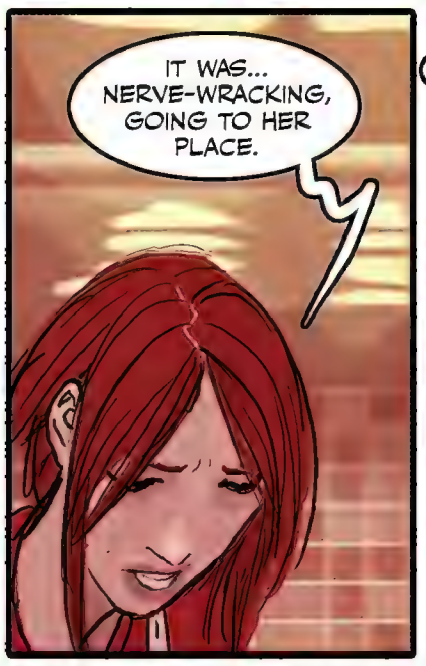

SO, COME ON! WHAT'S EATING YOU?

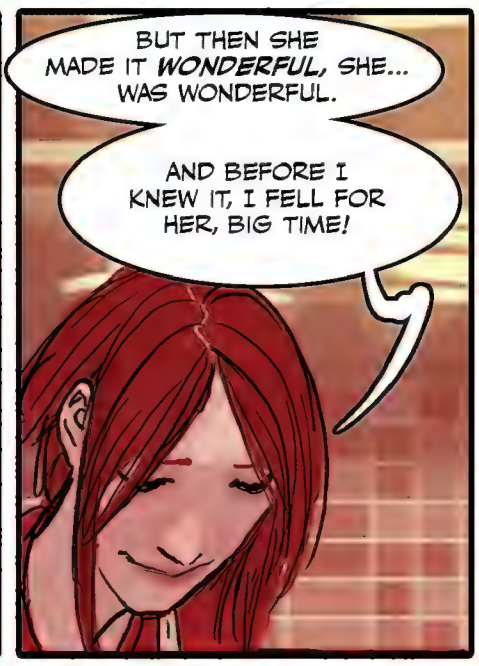

IS IT EMOTIONAL STUFF, OR...Y'KNOW... DEALING WITH THE WHOLE SEXUALITY THING?
OH, IT'S NOT THE SEXUALITY!

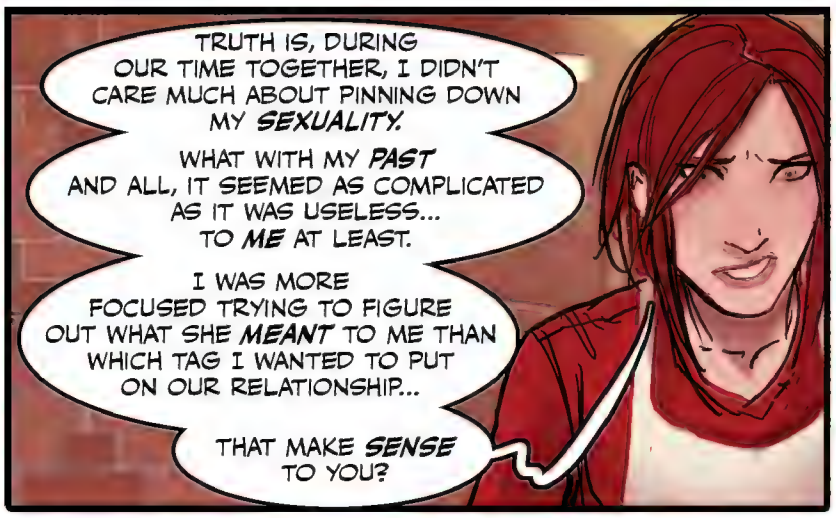

AH...OKAY, 'CAUSE, YOU ALWAYS GET KINDA STANDOFFISH WHEN THE TOPIC COMES UP, SO I FIGURED THAT'S WHAT BUGGED YOU.

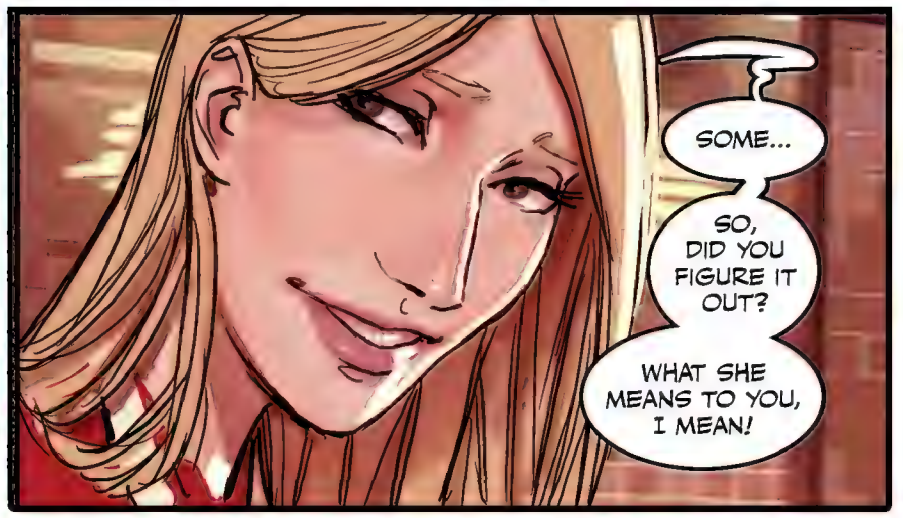
I DON'T KNOW, YOU HAD THIS VIBE OF SOMEONE BOTH IN HIDING AND IN DENIAL.
I HAD SOME EXPERIENCE. WITH THE HIDING PART.

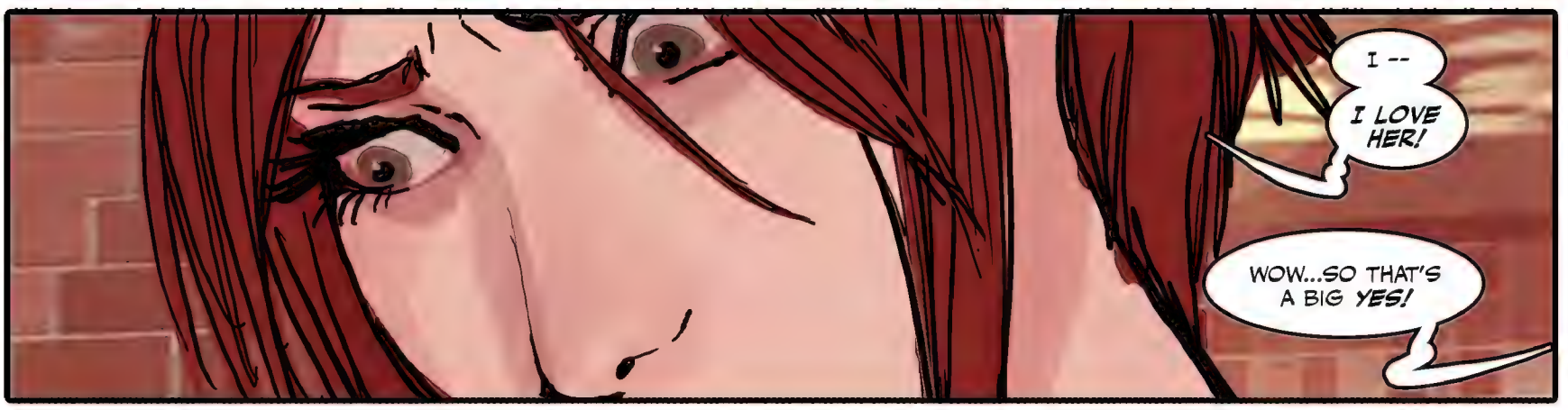

HONESTLY...IT WAS ALL SO NEW AND SUDDEN, I DON'T THINK I EVEN HAD THE TIME TO STRESS OUT ABOUT THE WHOLE SEXUALITY THING...
I MEAN, SURE! OUR FIRST TIME TOGETHER I WAS...I DON'T KNOW, FREAKING OUT A BIT!


IT WAS... NERVE-WRACKING, GOING TO HER PLACE.


BUT THEN SHE MADE IT WONDERFUL, SHE... WAS WONDERFUL.
AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, I FELL FOR HER, BIG TIME!





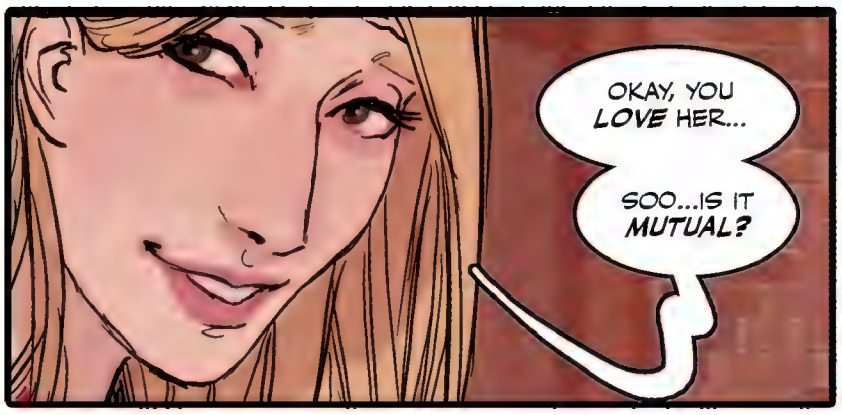


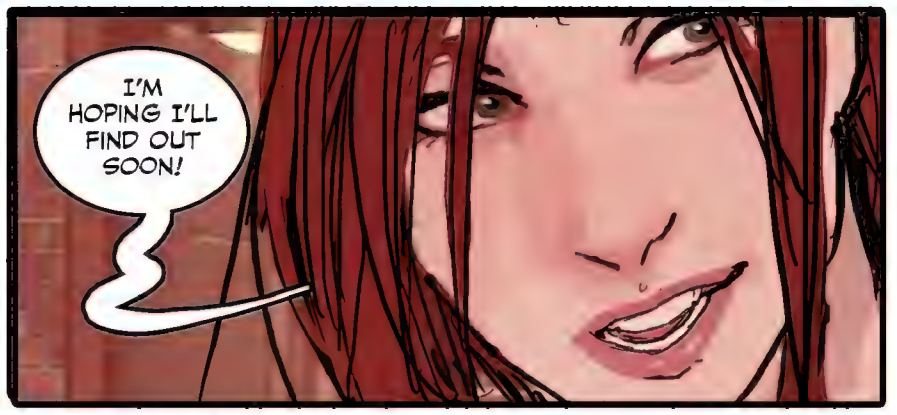
I NEEDED TO SAY THAT. I COULDN'T ADMIT IT TO ALLY AT THE TIME. I COULDN'T SHARE IT WITH ANNE OR CASSIE OR ANYONE...BUT I NEEDED TO TELL IT TO SOMEONE. I NEEDED TO HEAR THE WORDS COMING OUT OF MY MOUTH.

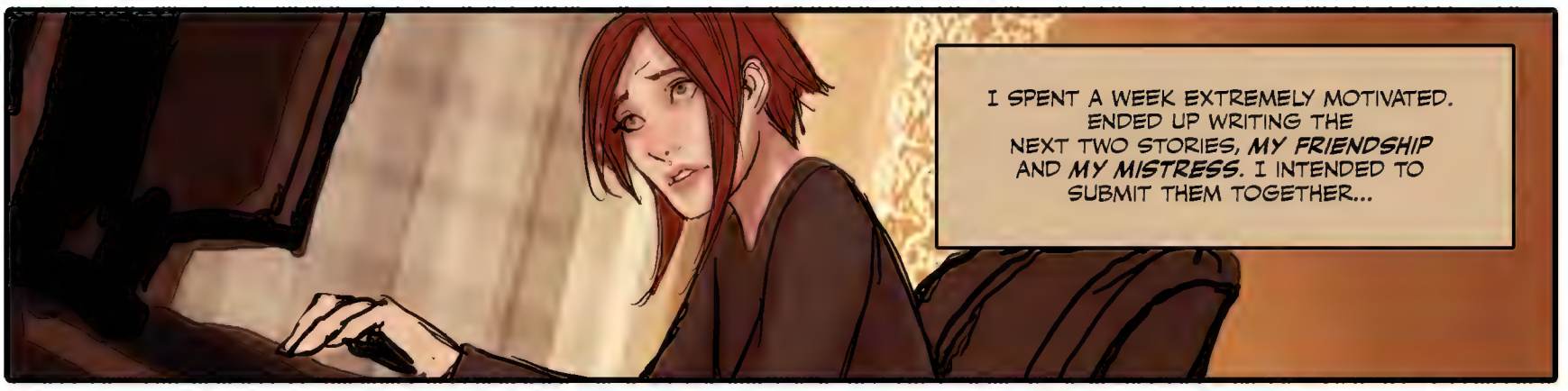
AND SO I SAID IT TO THE MOST UNLIKELY PERSON WILLING TO LISTEN. THE PERSON WHO I ONCE DISLIKED FOR THE STUPIDEST OF REASONS. VALERIE...

THERE SHE WAS. WILLING TO HEAR ME OUT. IT WAS A SLOW WORK DAY, SO WE SPENT MOST OF IT DISCUSSING OUR OWN VASTLY DIFFERENT, YET AT TIMES OVERLAPPING EXPERIENCES. SHARING ANECDOTES, LAUGHS, OCCASIONAL ADVICE...I DIDN'T GO INTO SPICY DETAILS... (I KEPT IT PG.)

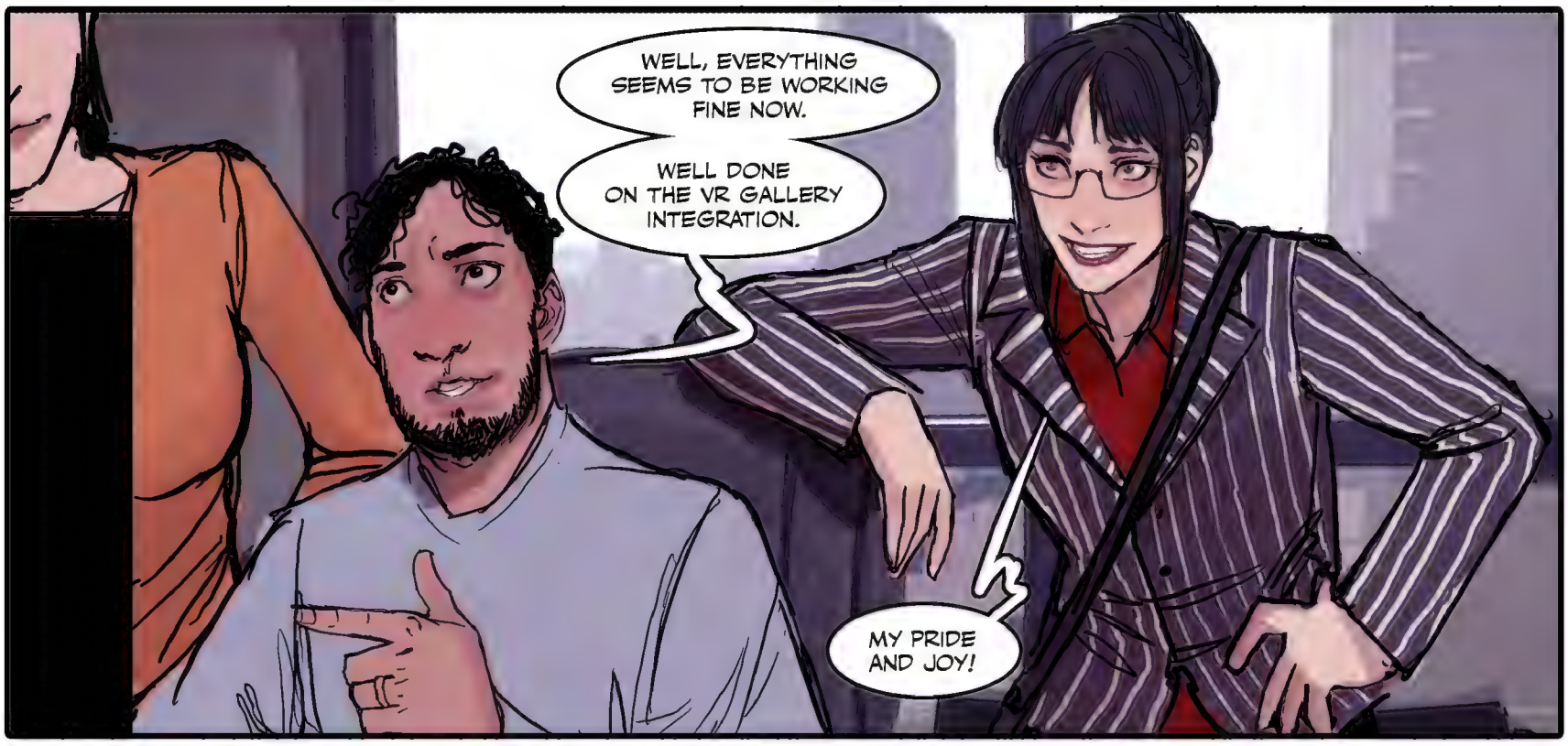
VALERIE AND I BECAME FRIENDS THAT DAY, AND FOR THOSE OF YOU WONDERING, THE HUMBLE PIE TASTES SOUR AND BITTER...BUT ODDLY HEALTHY!



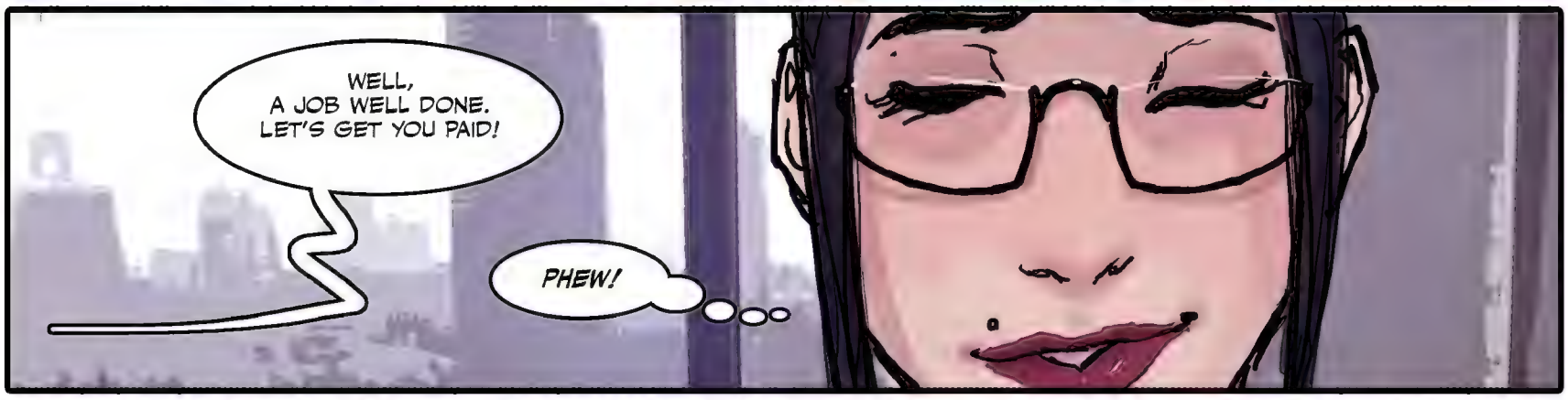


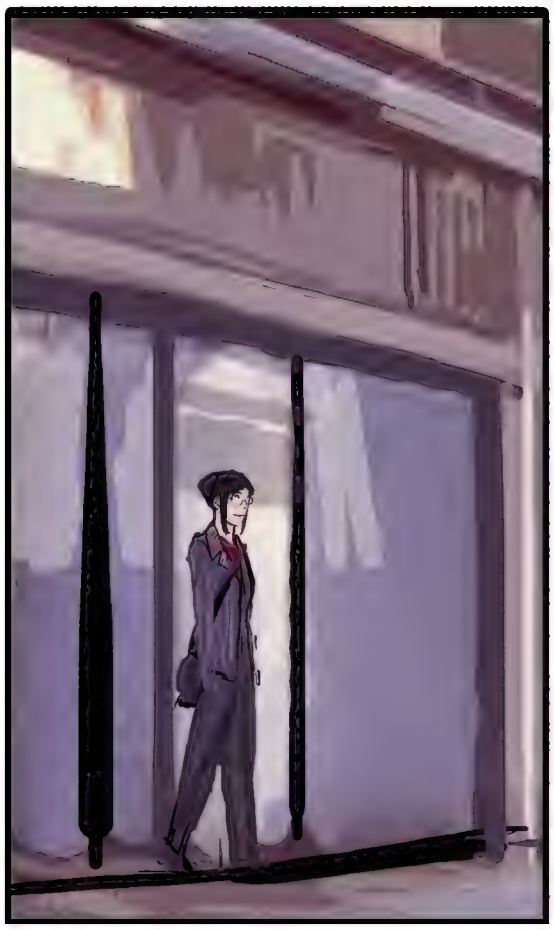


DECEMBER EIGHTEENTH. ALLY WAS FINISHED WITH HER LAST GIG A DAY BEFORE HER DEADLINE.


WELL, EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE WORKING FINE NOW.
WELL DONE ON THE VR GALLERY INTEGRATION.
MY PRIDE AND JOY!

CUT IT UNUSUALLY SHORT ON THE DEADLINE, THOUGH. HAD PROBLEMS?
ARM INJURY! FRESHLY HEALED, BUT YEAH, I WAS TYPING WITH ONE HAND.


WELL, A JOB WELL DONE. LET'S GET YOU PAID!
PHEW!



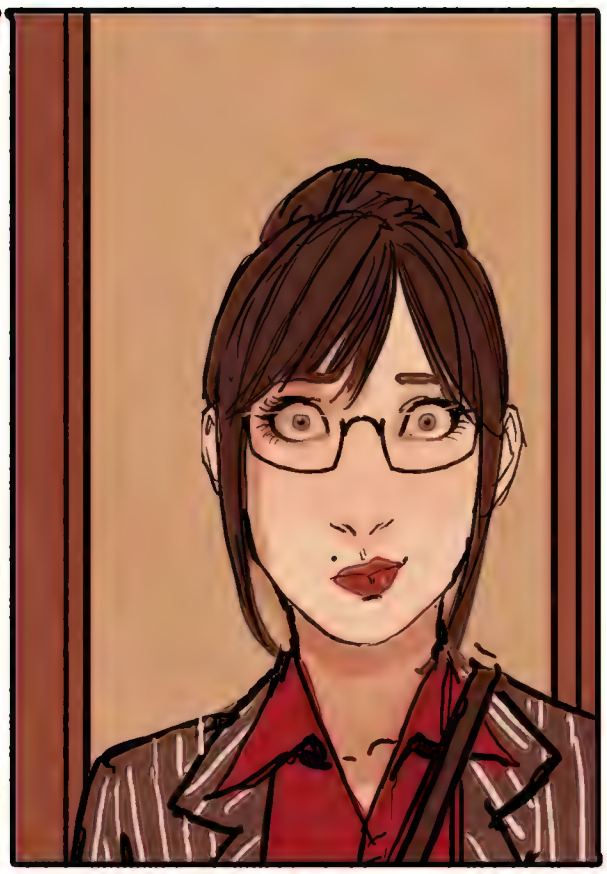
FUCK YEAH!

OKAY, SO NOW WHAT?

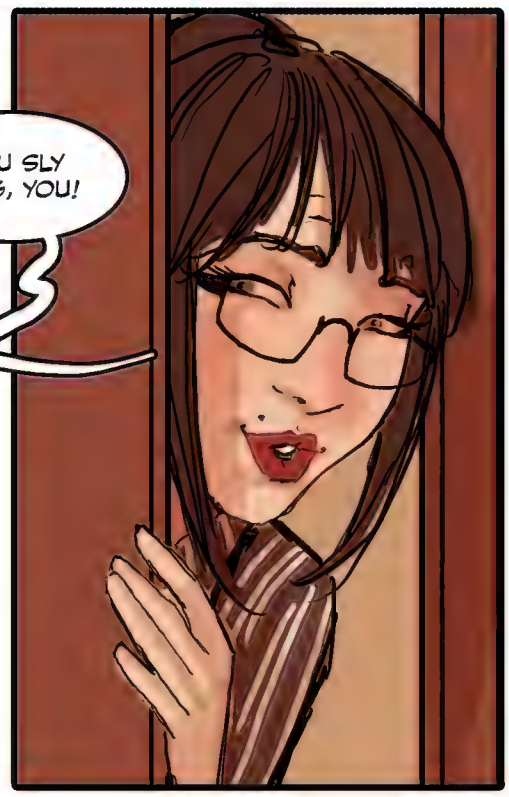
!

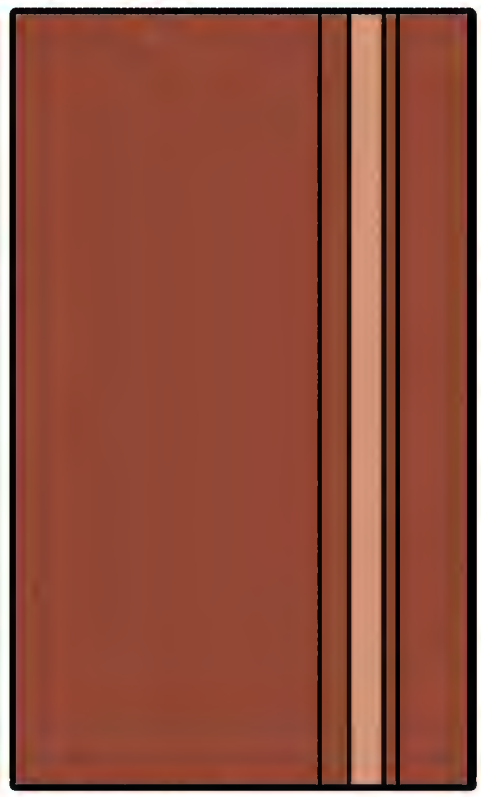
I HOPE YOU FEEL *MASOCHISTIC,* CAUSE I'M ABOUT TO WHOOP YOUR ASS IN DRINKING...

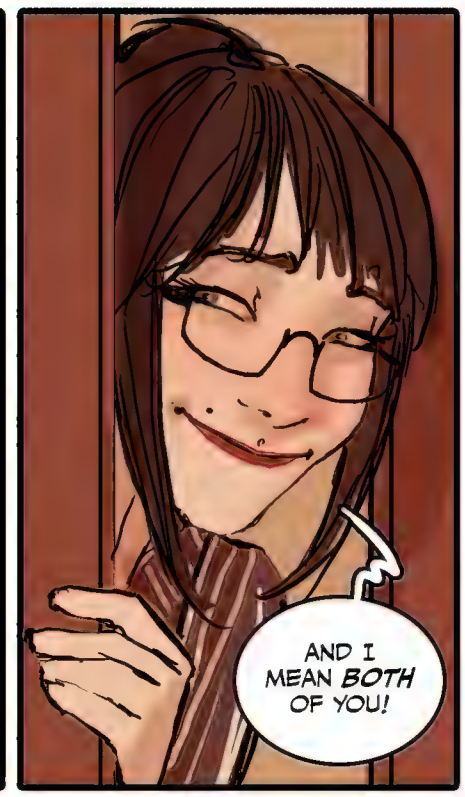
AND GAMI...

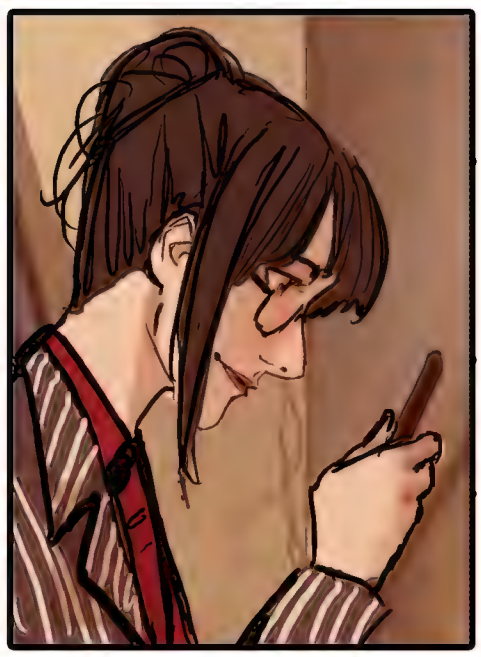


IT WILL HAVE TO WAIT A BIT!
HEY, ALLY!









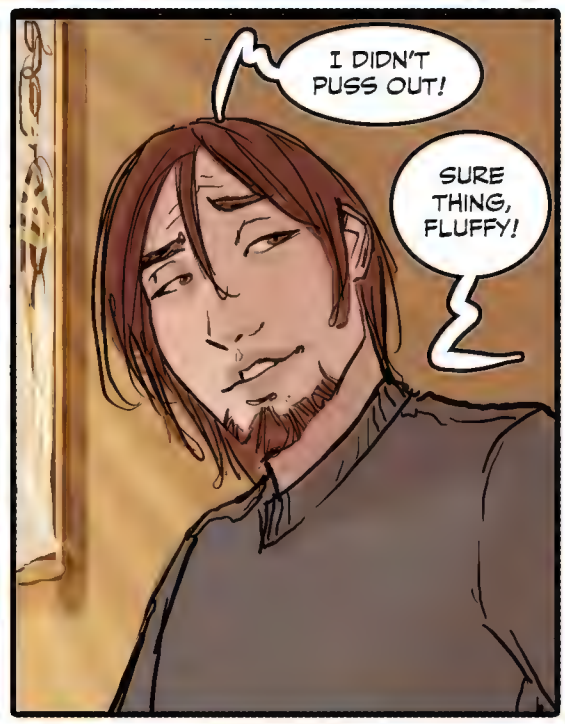
lisa: 2 new stories incoming!

NOT BAD!

RIGHT?

YOU KNOW, ANNE... I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU FOR AGES!

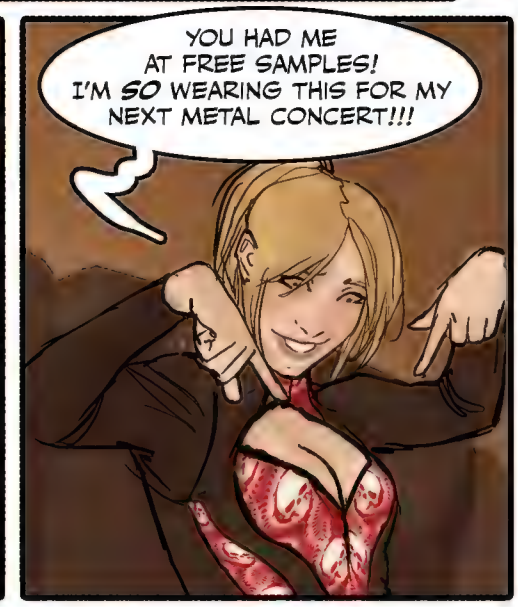
WELL, IF YOU HADN'T PUSSED OUT THE FIRST DAY WE MET...

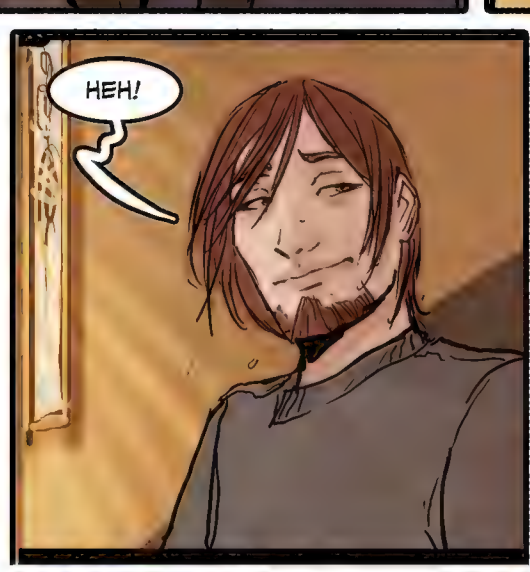

I DIDN'T PUSS OUT!
SURE THING, FLUFFY!

SO, YOU INTERESTED IN MAKING THIS A BIT MORE *PERMANENT?*

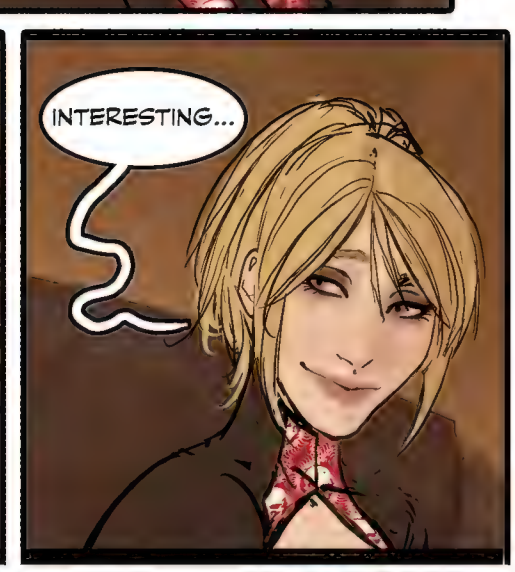
OH, ALAN... ARE YOU ASKING ME TO BE YOUR PATTERN DESIGNER?

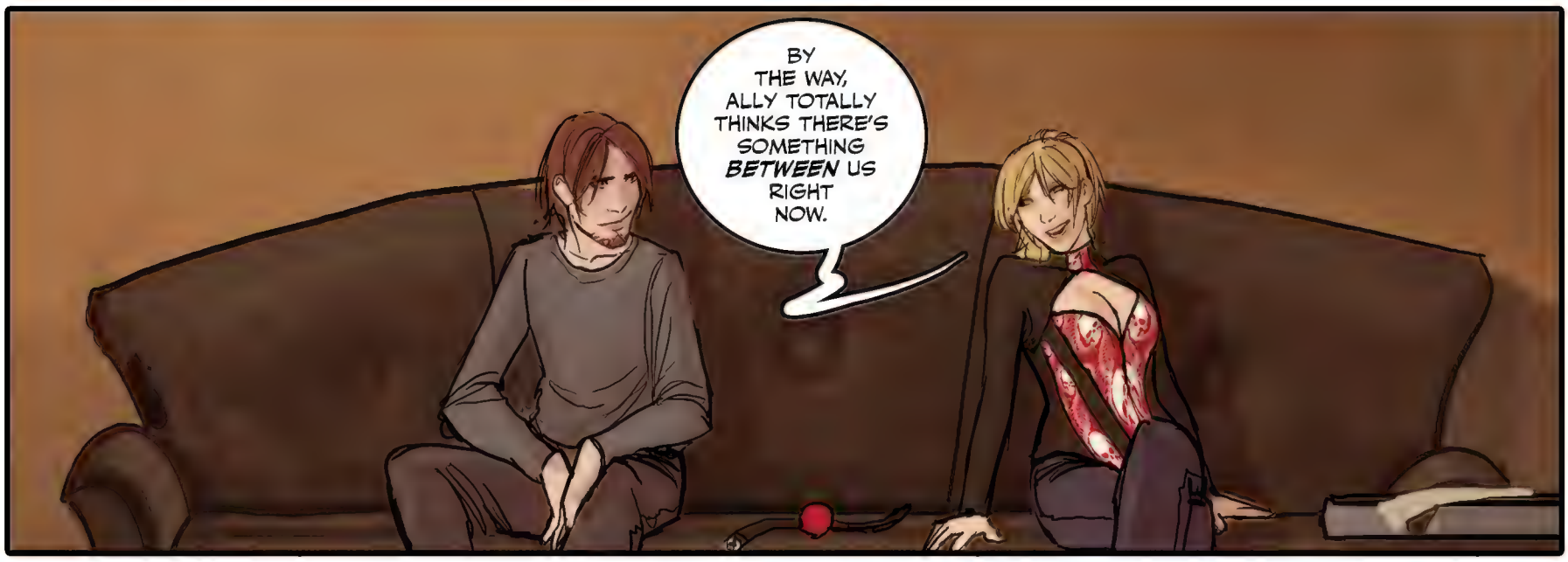
WELL, YES! I CAN'T DIGITALLY ART FOR SHIT -- YOU CAN.

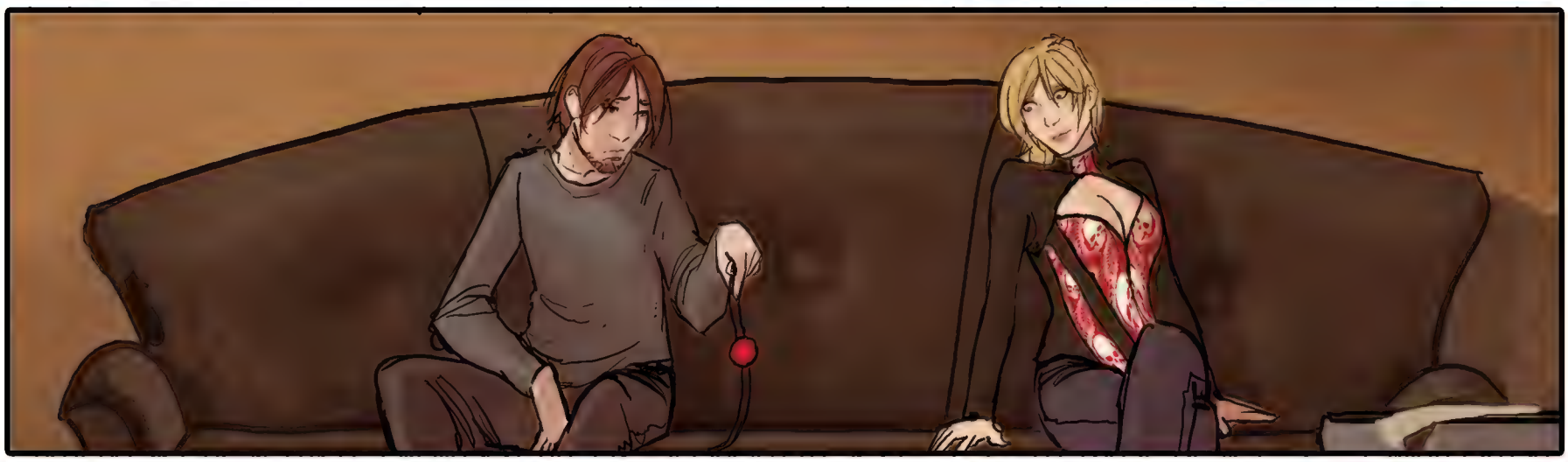

YOU HAD ME AT FREE SAMPLES! I'M *SO* WEARING THIS FOR MY NEXT METAL CONCERT!!!

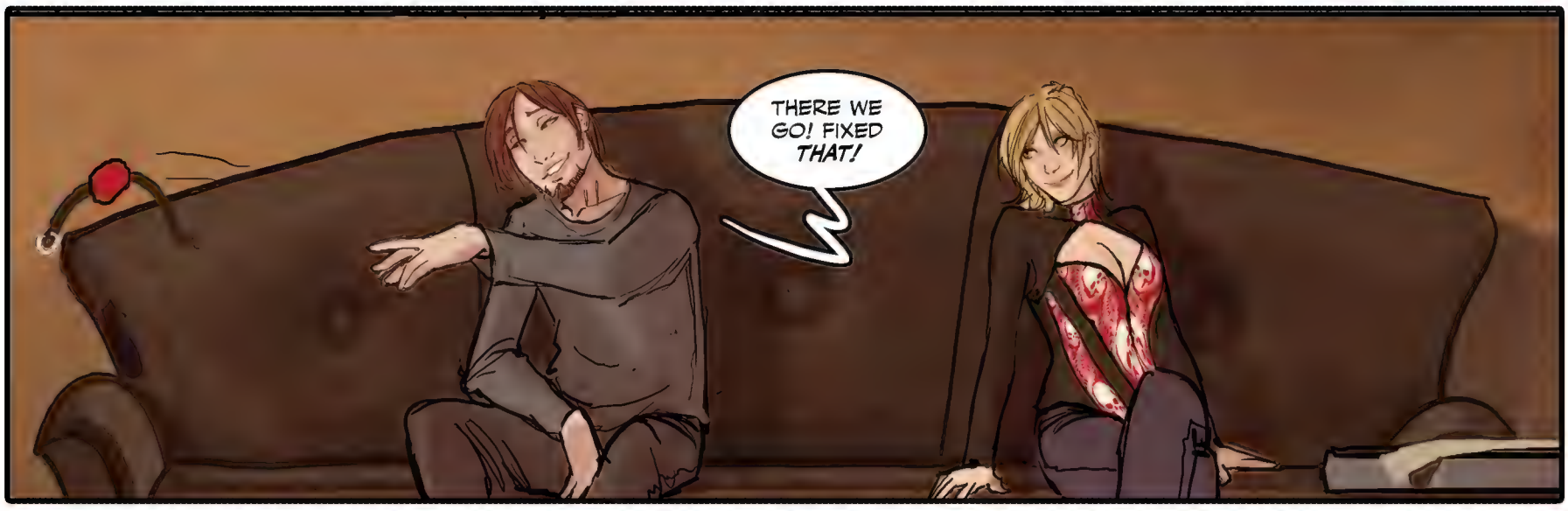

HEH!

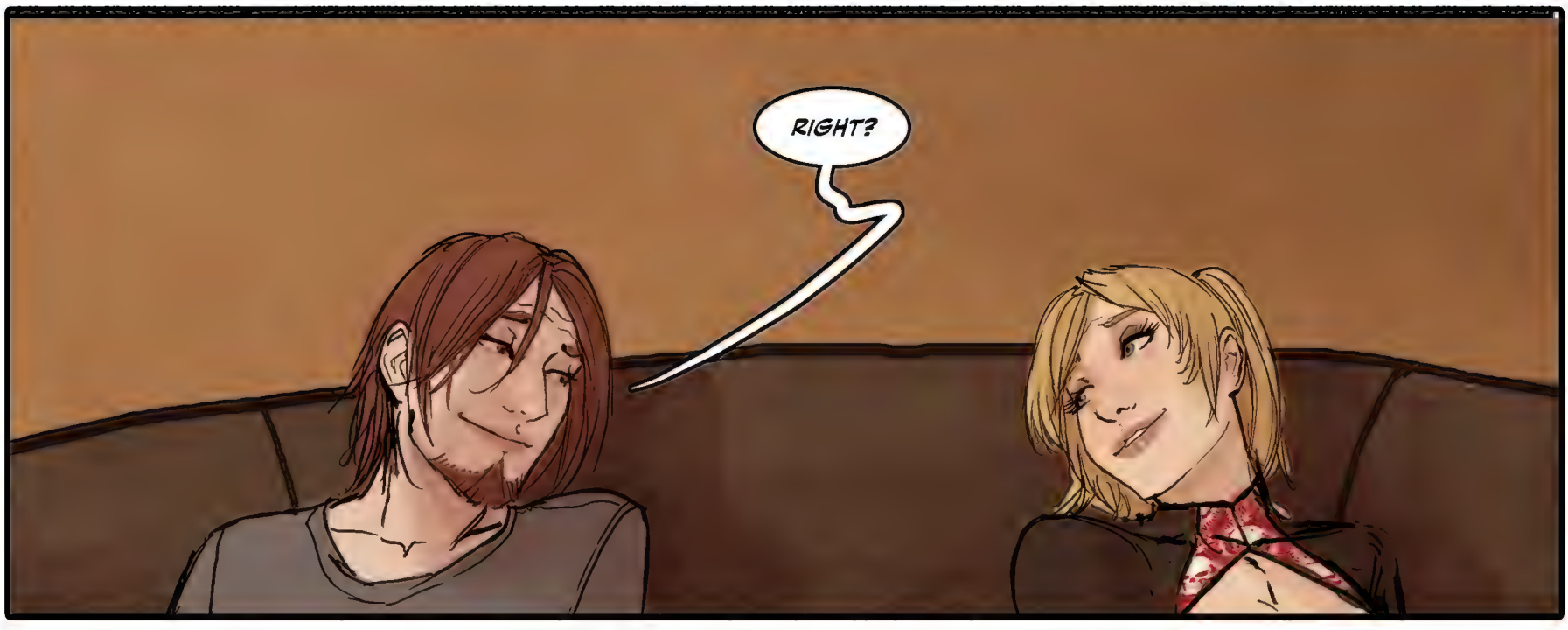
YOU KNOW... THERE IS A NEW YEAR'S PARTY AT THE CRIMSON... YOU'D FIT RIGHT IN!


INTERESTING...



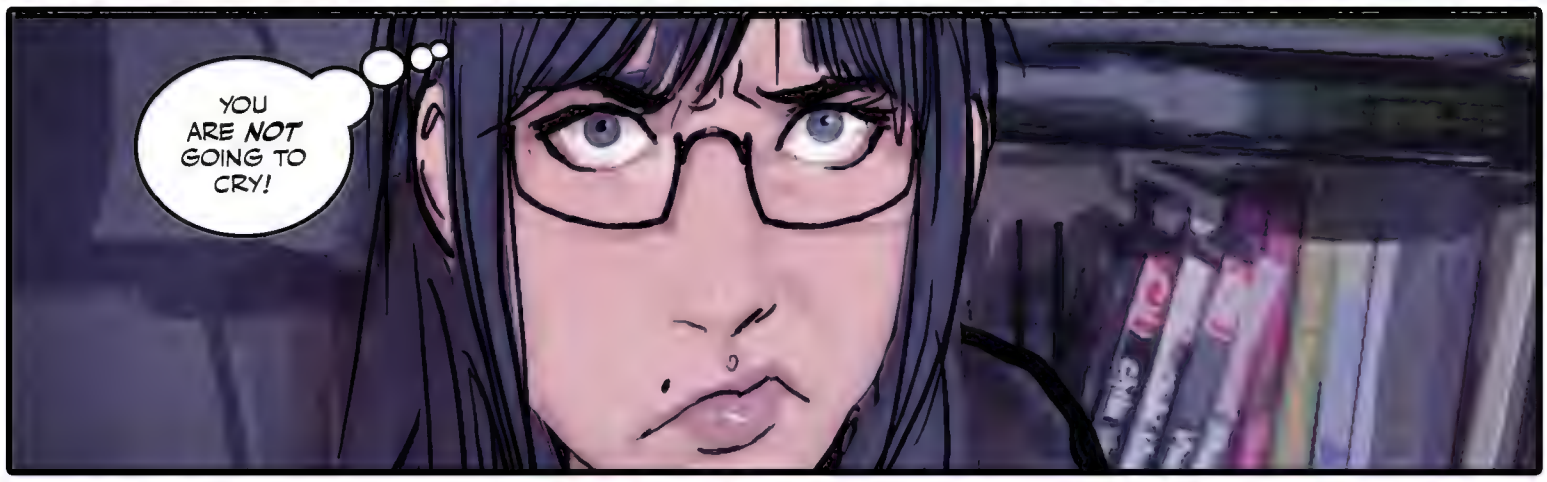


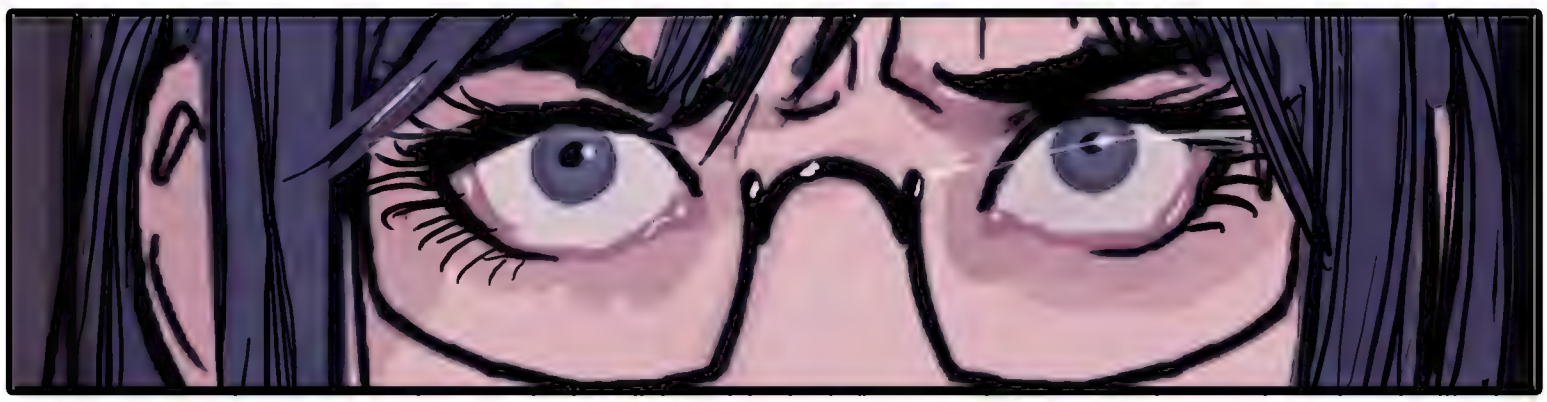




ANYYYYYWAYS, BACK TO ALLY...

OKAY, ALLISON!
YOU ARE GOING TO READ THIS!
AND *THIS TIME...*


YOU ARE *NOT* GOING TO CRY!



MY FRIEND

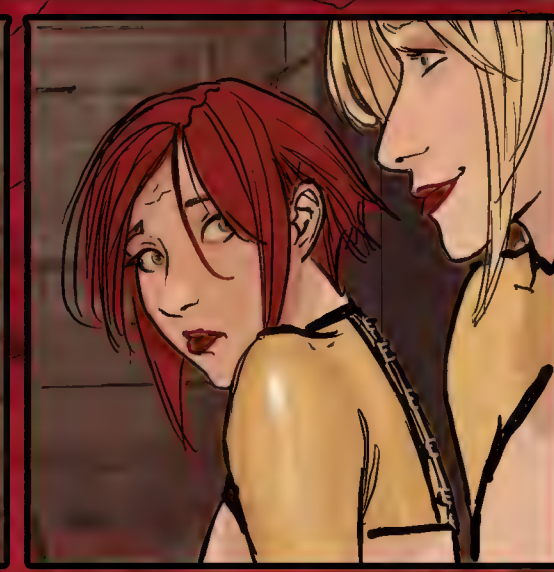
AWWWW--KWAAARD!

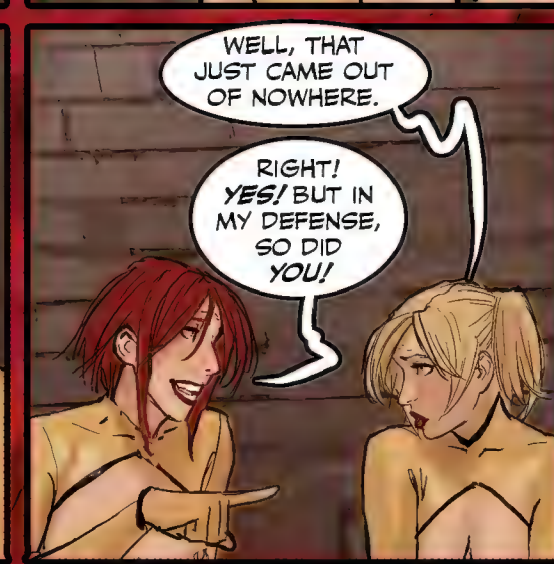
BUT WHY??? I MEAN, IT WAS NO SURPRISE...

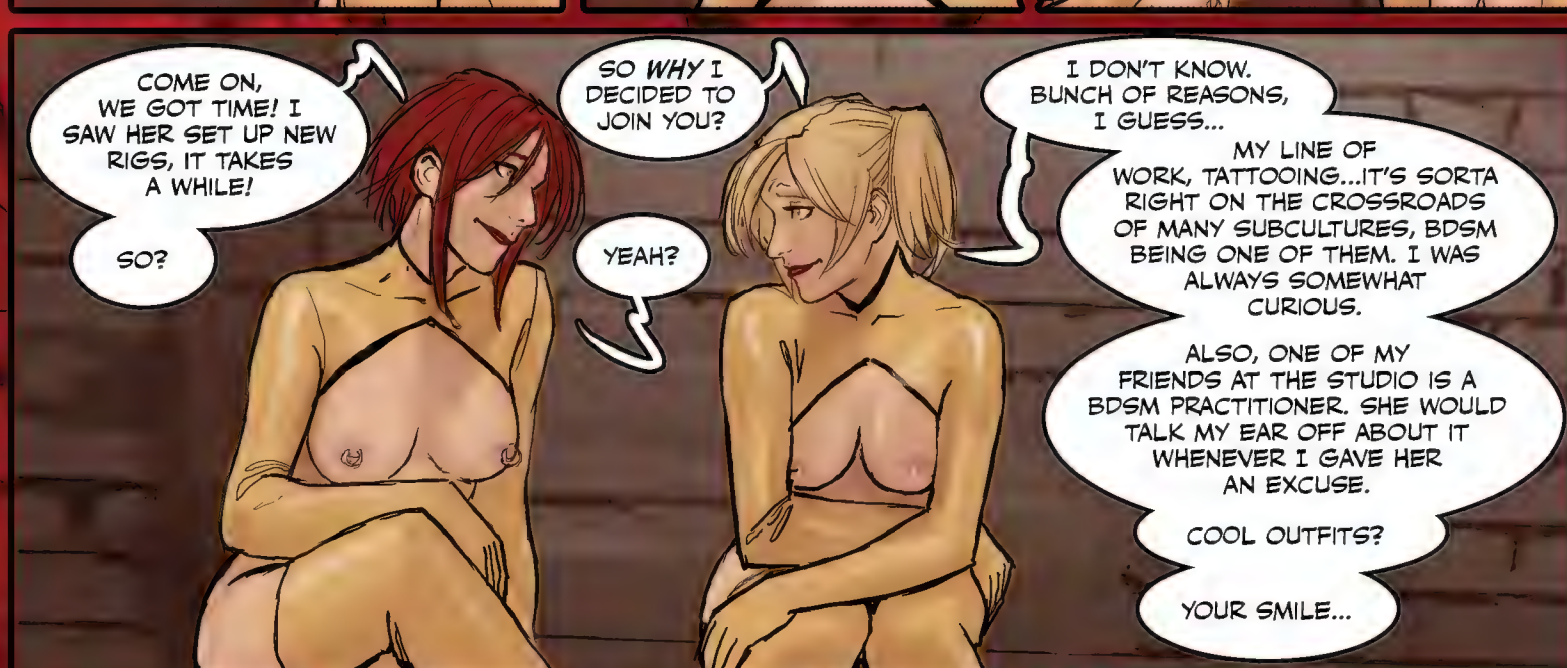
I KNEW THAT ANNE WOULD EVENTUALLY RETURN, EAGER TO ONCE AGAIN BECOME ***SARAH***, AS I WAS TO BECOME ***LISBETH.***

AND AFTER MY TIME ALONE WITH ALLISON, I THOUGHT I WAS OKAY WITH IT. YET, THERE WE WERE, WAITING FOR ALLISON TO SET UP SOME NEWLY OBTAINED RIG. AND I FELT RESTLESS.

AND NOT THE FUN KIND OF *"OOOH I'M GONNA GET IT!"* RESTLESS...

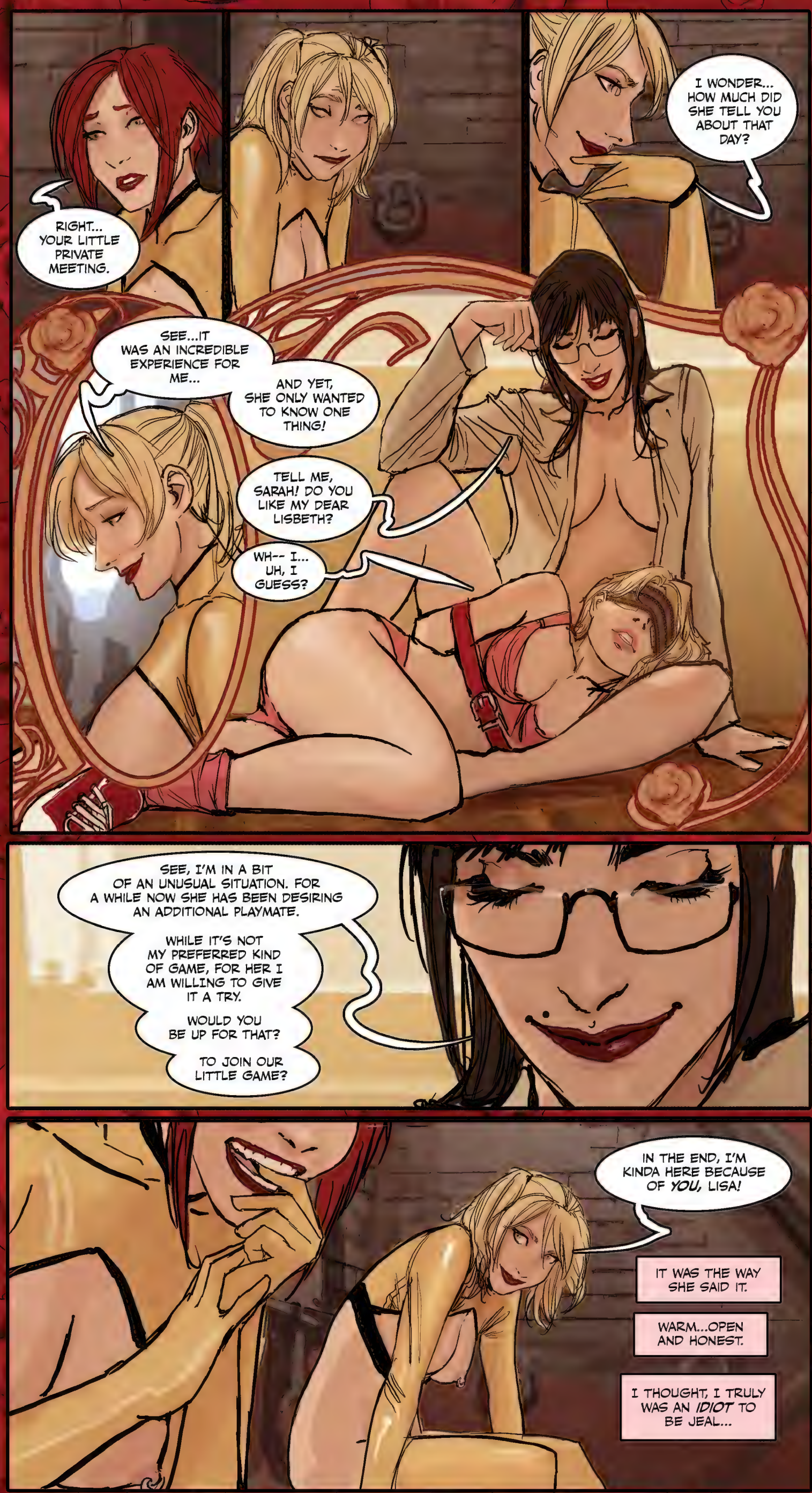






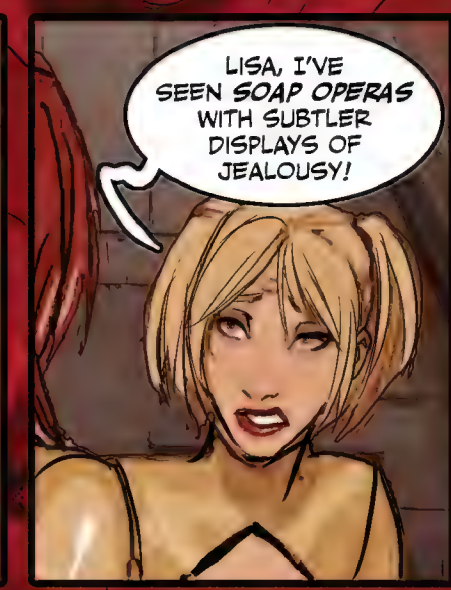
WUH-WHAT? I'M SORRY THAT WAS A LOT TO PROCESS!
HEH, I'LL WALK YOU THROUGH IT.
ABOUT A YEAR AGO, MY BDSM ENTHUSIAST FRIEND FROM THE STUDIO ASKED ME TO TAKE PART IN A CONVENTION PERFORMANCE.
I WAS SUPPOSED TO TATTOO THIS TIED-UP GUY ON A STAGE...PAID REALLY WELL, AND THEY WERE FUN PEOPLE...
PLUS, I GOT TO WEAR A SERIOUSLY WICKED OUTFIT...
IN THE END, THAT GOT ME THIS REPUTATION AS A TATTOO ARTIST YOU CALL TO DO CRAZY PROJECTS.
HEH...THAT WAS ACTUALLY HOW YOU WERE DESCRIBED TO US.
THERE YOU GO. AND SO ALLISON AND YOU CALLED ME TO DO A CRAZY THING...
AND YOU DID THE CRAZY THING!
AND THERE IS THE SMILE AGAIN!

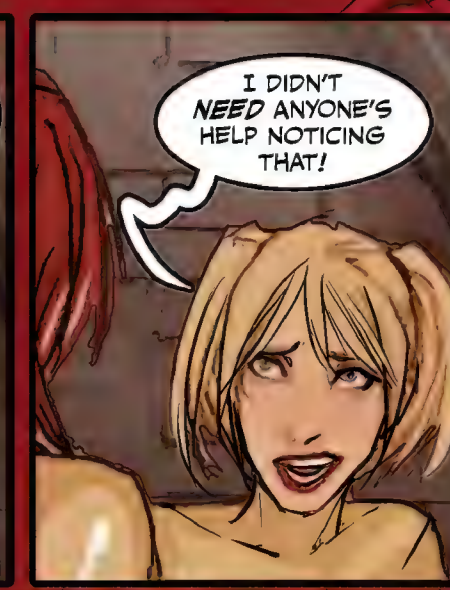
THAT FUCKING *SMILE.* I SWEAR, WHEN I SAW IT THAT DAY, I THOUGHT IT WAS LIKE YOU WERE TRYING TO CONTAIN AN UNSTOPPABLE *TIDE* OF HAPPINESS, BY BITING YOUR LIP. AND YET THIS JOY COULDN'T BE CONTAINED. AND...I WANTED THAT!
THAT WAS WHAT TIPPED THE SCALES OF SANITY FOR ME...
I HAD TO CONTACT THE TWO OF YOU AGAIN. I HAD ALLISON'S BUSINESS CARD, SO I THOUGHT OF AN EXCUSE, AND WENT TO MEET HER...

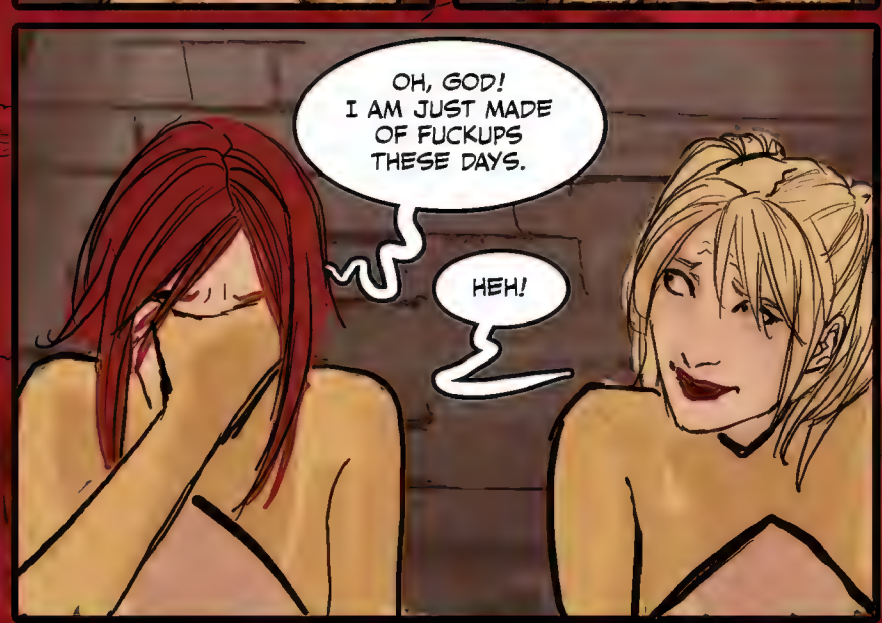

RIGHT... YOUR LITTLE PRIVATE MEETING.
I WONDER... HOW MUCH DID SHE TELL YOU ABOUT THAT DAY?
SEE...IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE FOR ME...
AND YET, SHE ONLY WANTED TO KNOW ONE THING!
TELL ME, SARAH! DO YOU LIKE MY DEAR LISBETH?
WH-- I... UH, I GUESS?
SEE, I'M IN A BIT OF AN UNUSUAL SITUATION. FOR A WHILE NOW SHE HAS BEEN DESIRING AN ADDITIONAL PLAYMATE.
WHILE IT'S NOT MY PREFERRED KIND OF GAME, FOR HER I AM WILLING TO GIVE IT A TRY.
WOULD YOU BE UP FOR THAT?
TO JOIN OUR LITTLE GAME?
IN THE END, I'M KINDA HERE BECAUSE OF *YOU*, LISA!
IT WAS THE WAY SHE SAID IT.
WARM...OPEN AND HONEST.
I THOUGHT, I TRULY WAS AN *IDIOT* TO BE JEAL...

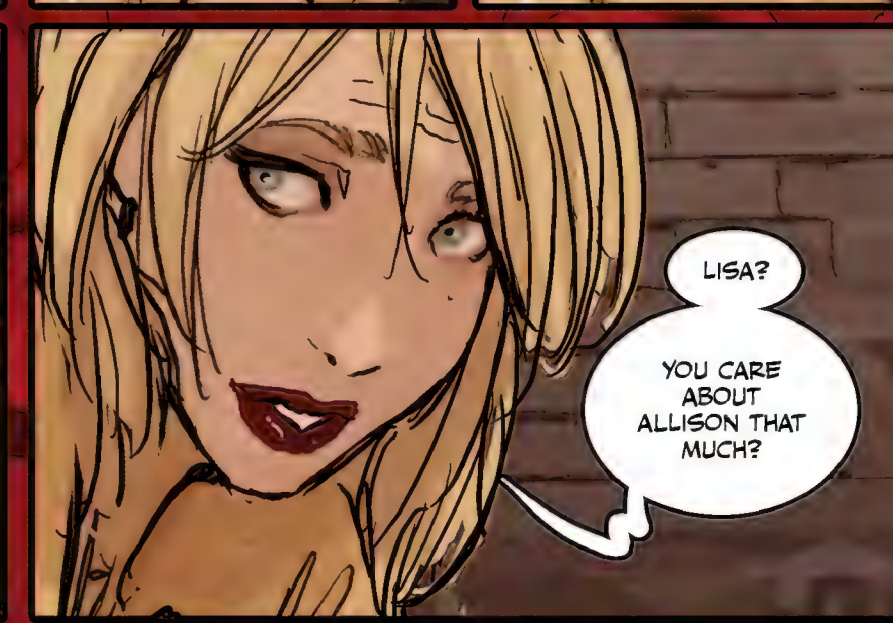
WAAAAIT!

SHE TOLD YOU ABOUT MY JEALOUSY!?


LISA, I'VE SEEN *SOAP OPERAS* WITH SUBTLER DISPLAYS OF JEALOUSY!


I DIDN'T *NEED* ANYONE'S HELP NOTICING THAT!


OH, GOD! I AM JUST MADE OF FUCKUPS THESE DAYS.
HEH!


LISA?
YOU CARE ABOUT ALLISON THAT MUCH?

CARE ABOUT ALLY?
MORE THAN I COULD EVER PUT INTO WORDS!

LET'S CHECK UP ON ALLY FOR A SECOND, SHALL WE?
HYPERVENTILATING, BUT HOLDING UP!
O-O-KAY! BACK TO THE STORY...

WHAT'S NOT TO CARE ABOUT?
ALLY IS WARM...
FUNNY...
CLEVER.
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE!
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE...

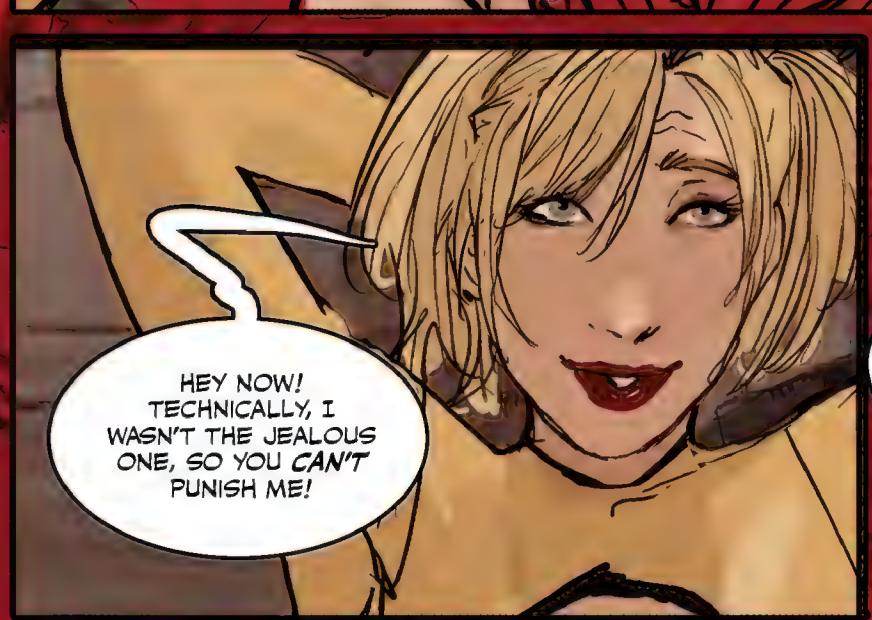
SHE IS KIND!
MY...FRIEND...
MY...

MY MISTRESS

KIND, HUH?
HEY, THIS USUALLY ALSO INVOLVES NIPPLE CLAMPS. SHE'S STILL NOT IN THE ZONE!

AH...SO SHE NEEDS SOME *MOTIVATION?*

WELL, WOULD YOU LOOK AT THE TWO OF YOU BEING ALL *FRIENDLY* AND *CLOSE!*
SEE, SARAH, MY LITTLE ***LISBETH*** HERE THOUGHT I MAY BE SHOWING YOU A LITTLE TOO MUCH ATTENTION, AND I'M NOTHING IF NOT FAIR, SO I FIGURED I'LL JUST TREAT YOU THE SAME FROM NOW ON.
I CAN'T HAVE JEALOUSY ON MY WATCH. IT'S AGAINST THE RULES, AND THOSE WHO BREAK THE RULES GET PUNISHED.


HEY NOW! TECHNICALLY, I WASN'T THE JEALOUS ONE, SO YOU ***CAN'T*** PUNISH ME!

FUNNY THAT!
I CHECKED MY RULEBOOK AND IT ALSO LISTS ***SMARTASSERY*** AS A BIG NO-NO!

ANNND MOTIVATED!
HERE!
WE!
GO!

A FRIEND ONCE JOKINGLY TOLD ME THAT BDSM IS ABOUT PEOPLE TRYING *WAY* TOO HARD FOR THEIR ORGASMS.

I ASSURE YOU, THERE IS *NO* TRUTH TO THAT!

ANYHOW, TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

SOOOO... HOW'S THE FAMILY?

KHM!

STOP FIDGETING!

YOU OKAY DOWN THERE, MISTRESS?

I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING! SO SHUT UP BEFORE I SHUT YOU UP!

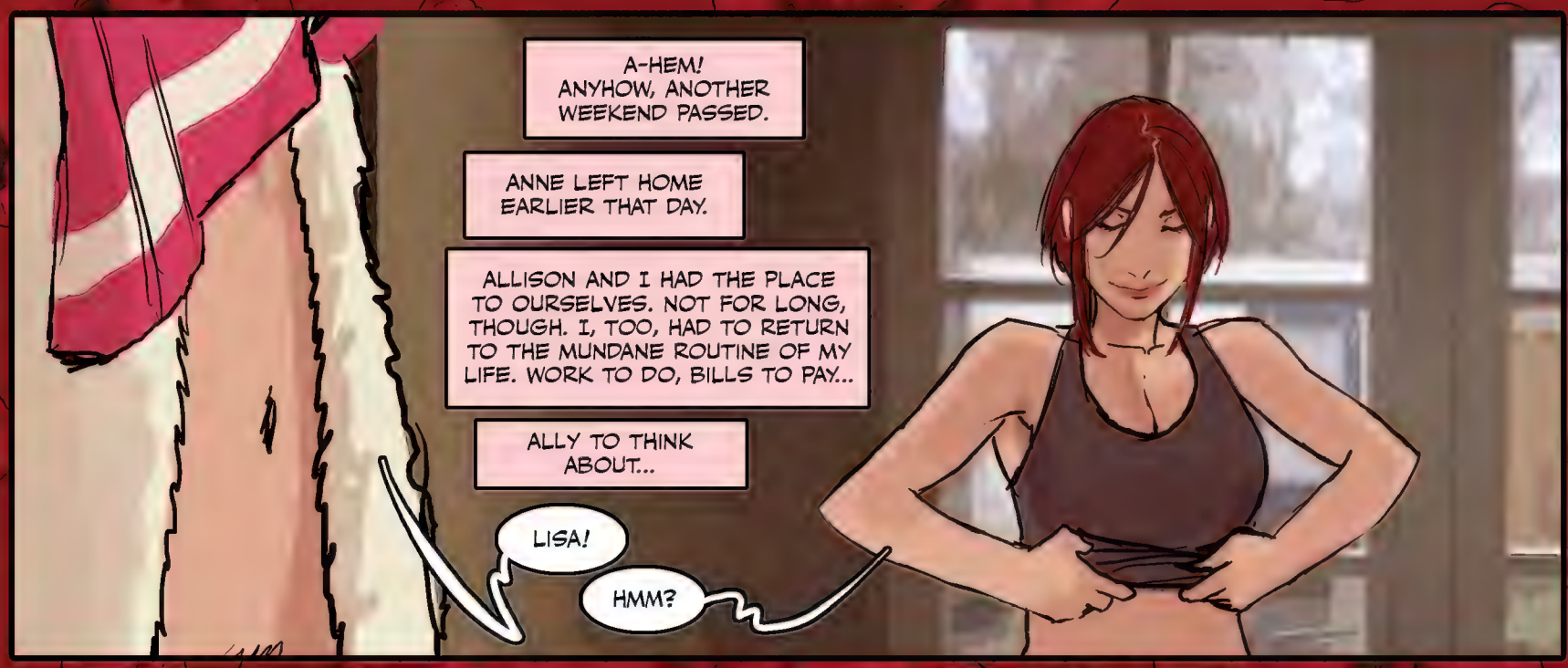
FINE, FINE! JUST REMEMBER... RIGHTY-TIGHTY, LEFTY-LOOSEY!

IT WAS TRUE...

SHE GOT INTO IT BEST WHEN WE -- OH, LET'S BE HONEST -- *PROVOKED* HER!

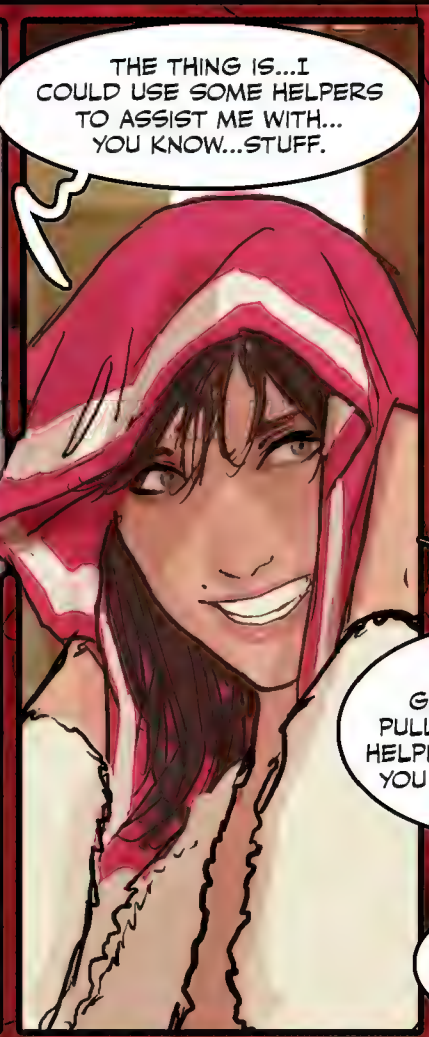
AND THAT DAY SHE WAS REALLY SPARKED. NOT ONLY DID SHE SPEND TWO HOURS WITH HER FRIEND SETTING UP THE THING BEFOREHAND, BUT IT WAS A SUSPENSION RIG...
SHE KNEW I LOVED THOSE... I KNEW SHE DIDN'T LIKE THEM.
BUT SHE STILL DID IT!
AND ONCE AGAIN (BETWEEN ORGASMS), I THOUGHT OF HOW MUCH SHE MEANT TO ME...
MMPH!
I KNOW...
MM!
YUP! THOSE BATTERIES WILL LAST FOR A WHILE!
BY THE WAY, LISBETH! I WAS MEANING TO ASK! IS IT RIGHTY-TIGHTY ENOUGH FOR YOU?
FUNNY THING IS, UNTIL NOW I NEVER SAW THE ATTRACTION OF FORNIPHILIA...GUESS THIS WAS A BIT OF AN ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCE!
GMMMH!
THAT LAST ONE WAS A GROAN!
AND I WOULDN'T HAVE HER ANY OTHER WAY, PUNS AND ALL...
THAT WAS MY MISTRESS. SILLY AT TIMES...
DEVIOUSLY CLEVER!

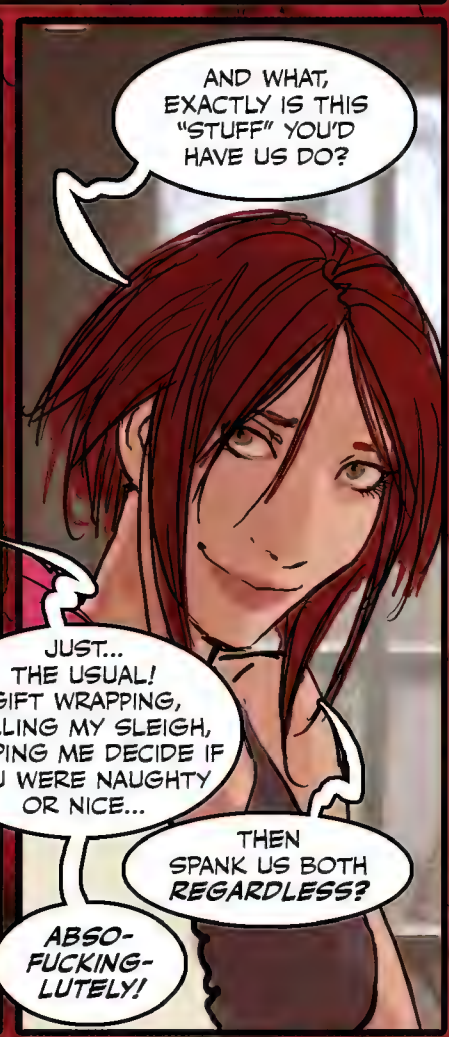
AND, OH YES! SHE COULD BE SADISTIC...
ANNND THIS IS WHERE I SKIP ABOUT THIRTY PAGES WORTH OF RAW PORN...
WHAT? HEY, HIDDEN MESSAGES OR NOT, THOSE WERE PORN STORIES! HELL, I HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH HASSLE WITH ALL THE ONLINE PEOPLE CALLING MARY SUE ON LISBETH TALES AS IT WAS! IF ALL OF A SUDDEN I TURNED MY ONLINE SMUT INTO A TASTEFUL ROMANCE, I'D HAVE A RIOT ON MY HANDS. SO, MOVING ON!
YES, SHE WAS SILLY, CLEVER, SADISTIC...ALL OF IT AND MORE!
AND IN THE END, WHENEVER THE GAME ENDED, SHE WAS THERE FOR US.
TENDER, CARING, OFFERING BOTH A HELPING HAND AND A KIND WORD.
MY MISTRESS...
MY ALLY...

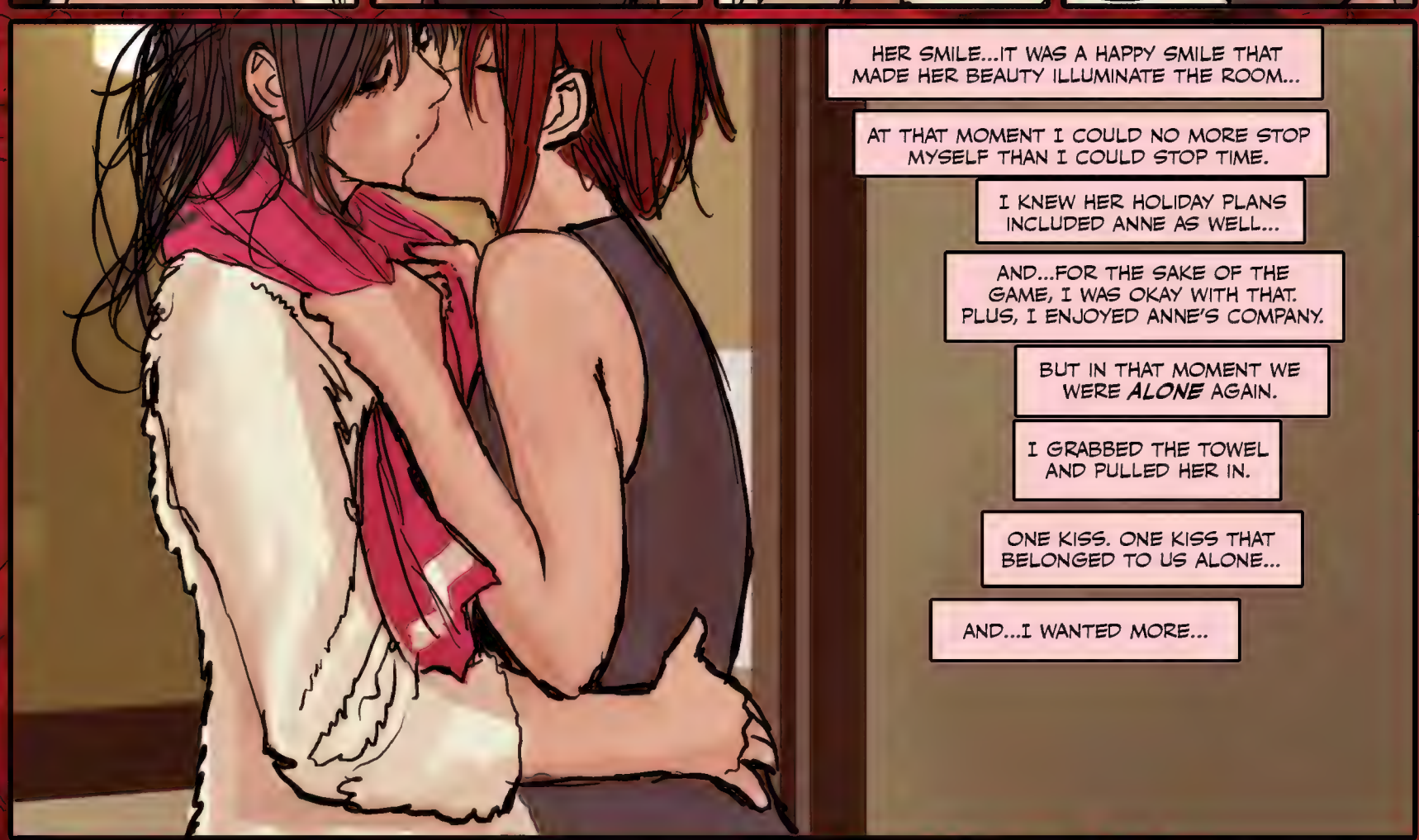

A-HEM! ANYHOW, ANOTHER WEEKEND PASSED.
ANNE LEFT HOME EARLIER THAT DAY.
ALLISON AND I HAD THE PLACE TO OURSELVES. NOT FOR LONG, THOUGH. I, TOO, HAD TO RETURN TO THE MUNDANE ROUTINE OF MY LIFE. WORK TO DO, BILLS TO PAY...
ALLY TO THINK ABOUT...
LISA!
HMM?

I WAS WONDERING. YOU SAID YOU HAD DAYS OFF FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

I DO!


THE THING IS...I COULD USE SOME HELPERS TO ASSIST ME WITH... YOU KNOW...STUFF.
JUST... THE USUAL! GIFT WRAPPING, PULLING MY SLEIGH, HELPING ME DECIDE IF YOU WERE NAUGHTY OR NICE...
ABSO-FUCKING-LUTELY!


AND WHAT, EXACTLY IS THIS "STUFF" YOU'D HAVE US DO?
THEN SPANK US BOTH REGARDLESS?


HER SMILE...IT WAS A HAPPY SMILE THAT MADE HER BEAUTY ILLUMINATE THE ROOM...
AT THAT MOMENT I COULD NO MORE STOP MYSELF THAN I COULD STOP TIME.
I KNEW HER HOLIDAY PLANS INCLUDED ANNE AS WELL...
AND...FOR THE SAKE OF THE GAME, I WAS OKAY WITH THAT. PLUS, I ENJOYED ANNE'S COMPANY.
BUT IN THAT MOMENT WE WERE ALONE AGAIN.
I GRABBED THE TOWEL AND PULLED HER IN.
ONE KISS. ONE KISS THAT BELONGED TO US ALONE...
AND...I WANTED MORE...

TO BE CONTINUED...

SONOFA-BITCH!

SNIFF!

ARGH!

DAMN IT!

MORE! NOW!

SOON!

HOW SOON IS SOON?

29TH!

THAT'S NOT SOON! THAT'S LIKE TEN DAYS!!!

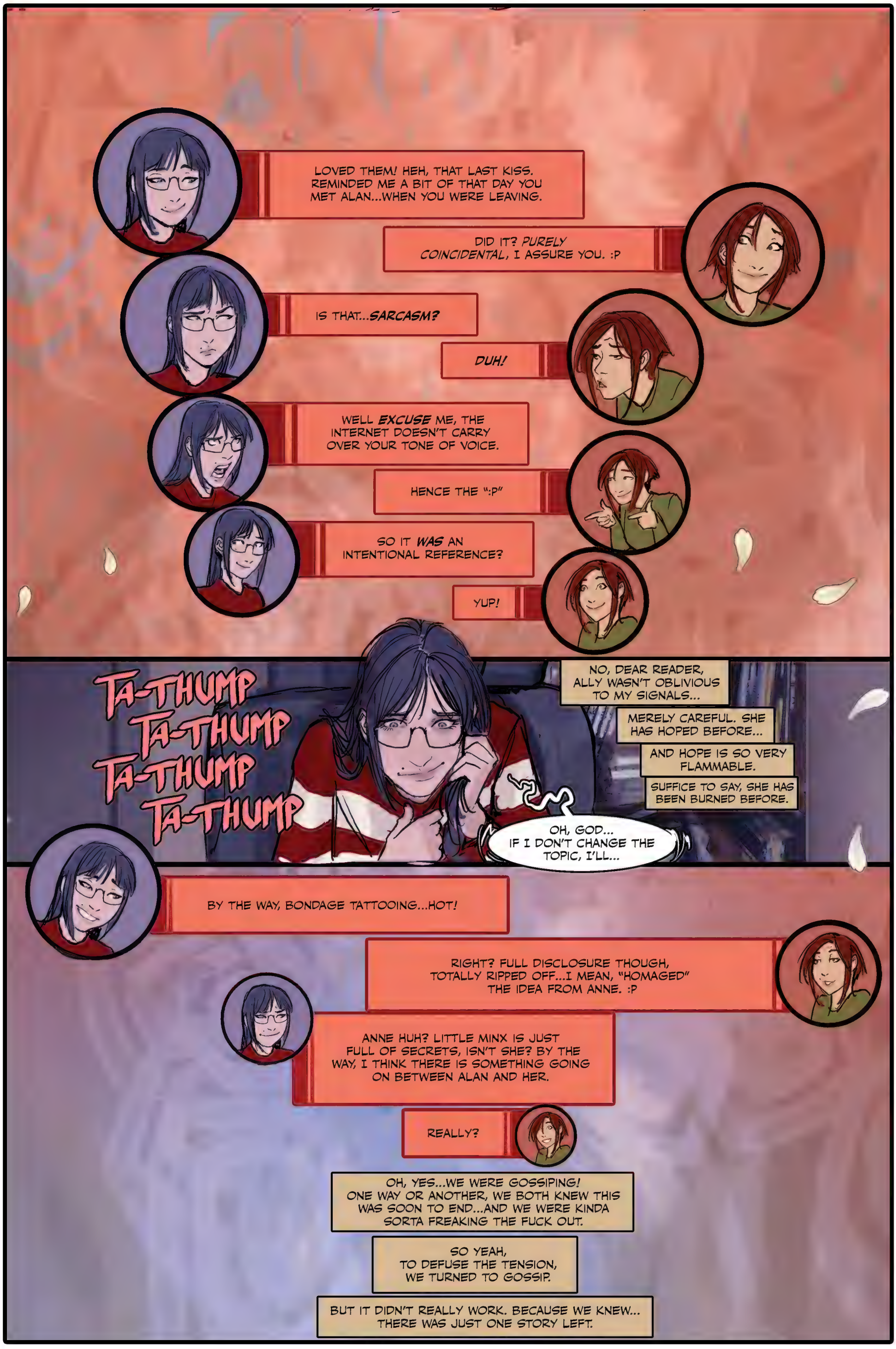
IT IS IMPORTANT I DO THIS RIGHT. PLEASE, BE PATIENT; THE NEXT ONE IS THE LAST STORY...

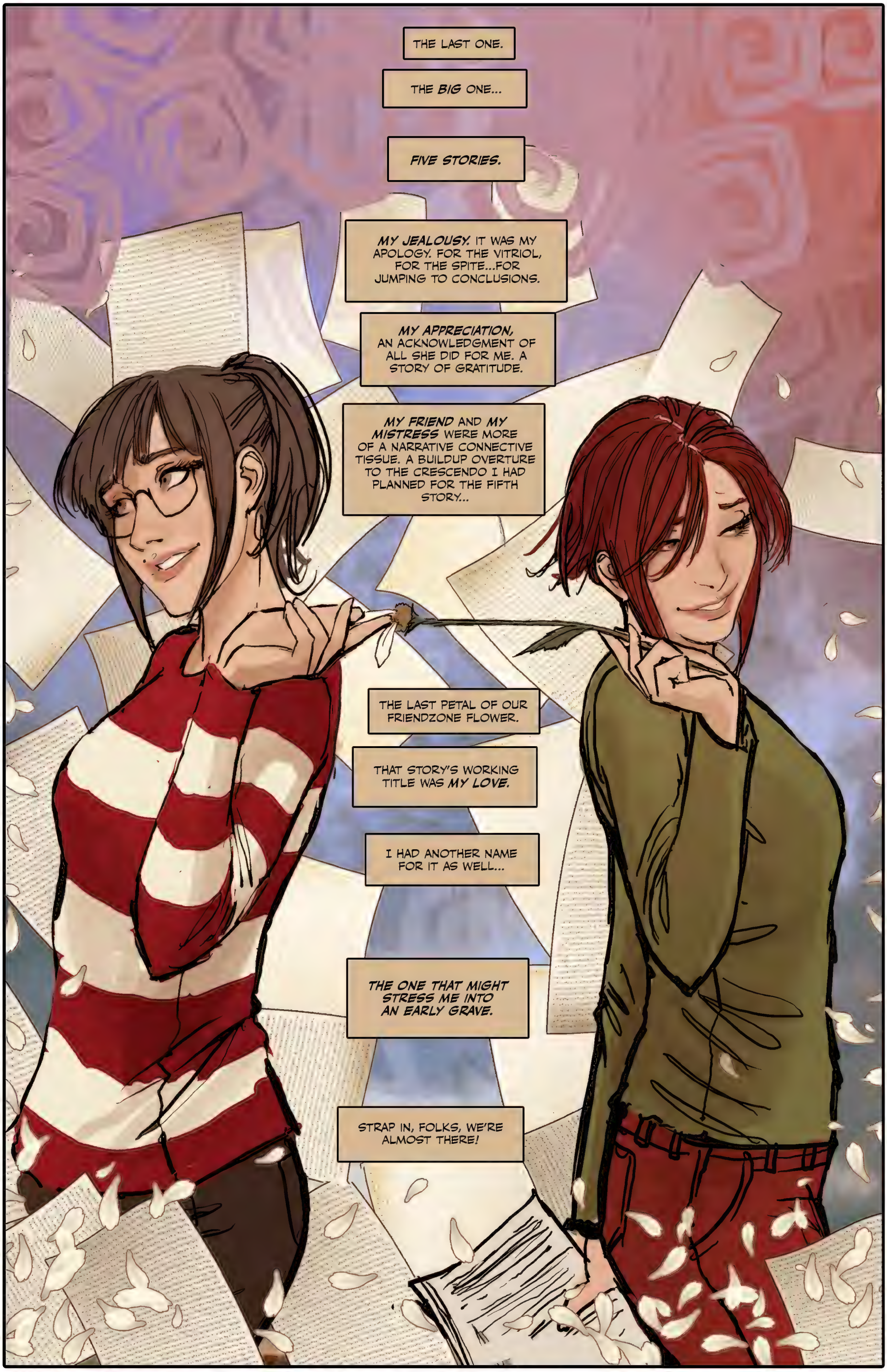
WHAT???

JUST...PLEASE. WE'LL TALK AFTER YOU READ IT, OKAY?

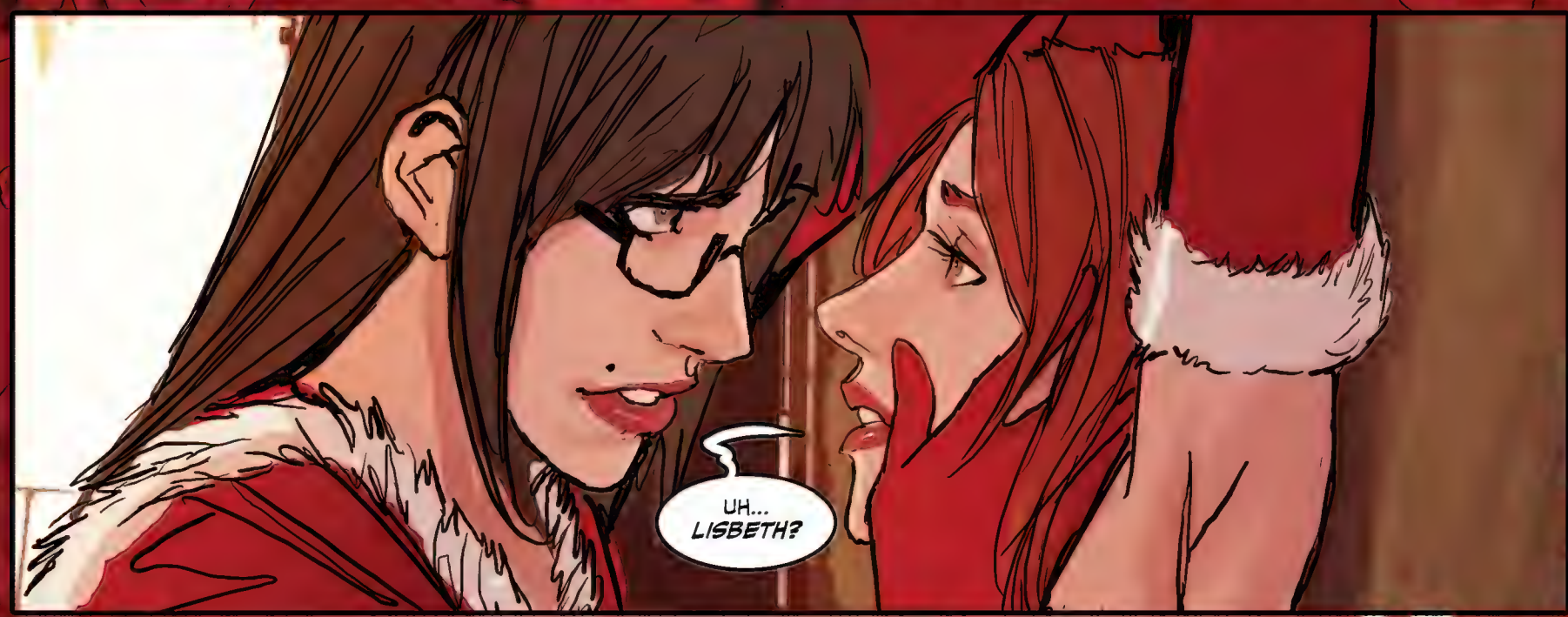
FINE...I GUESS!

SOOO? THE STORIES? GOOD? BAD? BURN IMMEDIATELY?


LOVED THEM! HEH, THAT LAST KISS. REMINDED ME A BIT OF THAT DAY YOU MET ALAN...WHEN YOU WERE LEAVING.
DID IT? PURELY COINCIDENTAL, I ASSURE YOU. :P
IS THAT...SARCASM?
DUH!
WELL EXCUSE ME, THE INTERNET DOESN'T CARRY OVER YOUR TONE OF VOICE.
HENCE THE ":P"
SO IT WAS AN INTENTIONAL REFERENCE?
YUP!
TA-THUMP TA-THUMP TA-THUMP TA-THUMP
NO, DEAR READER, ALLY WASN'T OBLIVIOUS TO MY SIGNALS...
MERELY CAREFUL. SHE HAS HOPED BEFORE...
AND HOPE IS SO VERY FLAMMABLE.
SUFFICE TO SAY, SHE HAS BEEN BURNED BEFORE.
OH, GOD... IF I DON'T CHANGE THE TOPIC, I'LL...
BY THE WAY, BONDAGE TATTOOING...HOT!
RIGHT? FULL DISCLOSURE THOUGH, TOTALLY RIPPED OFF...I MEAN, "HOMAGED" THE IDEA FROM ANNE. :P
ANNE HUH? LITTLE MINX IS JUST FULL OF SECRETS, ISN'T SHE? BY THE WAY, I THINK THERE IS SOMETHING GOING ON BETWEEN ALAN AND HER.
REALLY?
OH, YES...WE WERE GOSSIPING! ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WE BOTH KNEW THIS WAS SOON TO END...AND WE WERE KINDA SORTA FREAKING THE FUCK OUT.
SO YEAH, TO DEFUSE THE TENSION, WE TURNED TO GOSSIP.
BUT IT DIDN'T REALLY WORK. BECAUSE WE KNEW... THERE WAS JUST ONE STORY LEFT.


THE LAST ONE.
THE *BIG* ONE...
FIVE STORIES.
MY JEALOUSY. IT WAS MY APOLOGY. FOR THE VITRIOL, FOR THE SPITE...FOR JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS.
MY APPRECIATION, AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ALL SHE DID FOR ME. A STORY OF GRATITUDE.
MY FRIEND AND ***MY MISTRESS*** WERE MORE OF A NARRATIVE CONNECTIVE TISSUE. A BUILDUP OVERTURE TO THE CRESCENDO I HAD PLANNED FOR THE FIFTH STORY...
THE LAST PETAL OF OUR FRIENDZONE FLOWER.
THAT STORY'S WORKING TITLE WAS ***MY LOVE.***
I HAD ANOTHER NAME FOR IT AS WELL...
THE ONE THAT MIGHT STRESS ME INTO AN EARLY GRAVE.
STRAP IN, FOLKS, WE'RE ALMOST THERE!

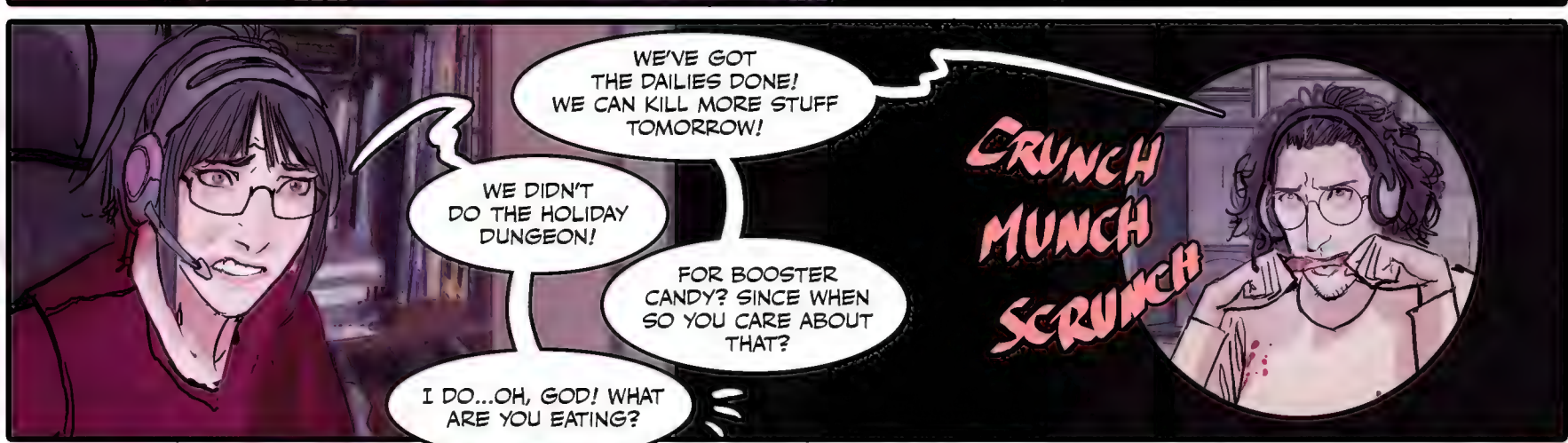
DECEMBER 20TH.
LISA...

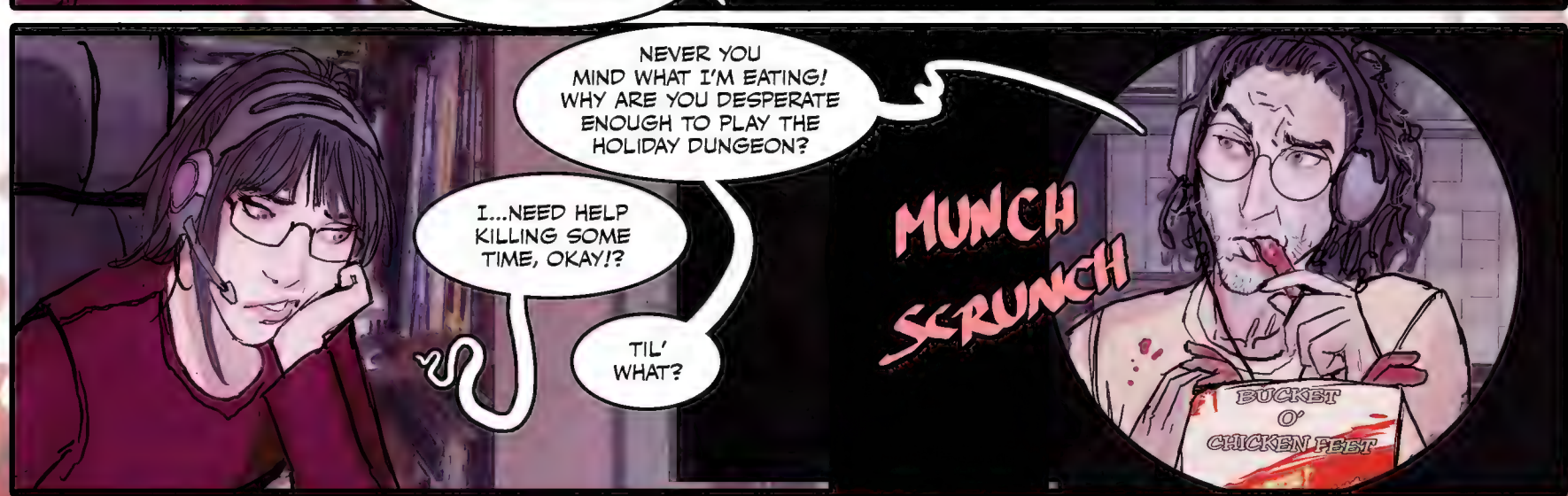

UH... LISBETH?

NO, LISA! THERE IS SOMETHING I REALLY NEED *LISA* TO KNOW...I...I FELL IN LO...

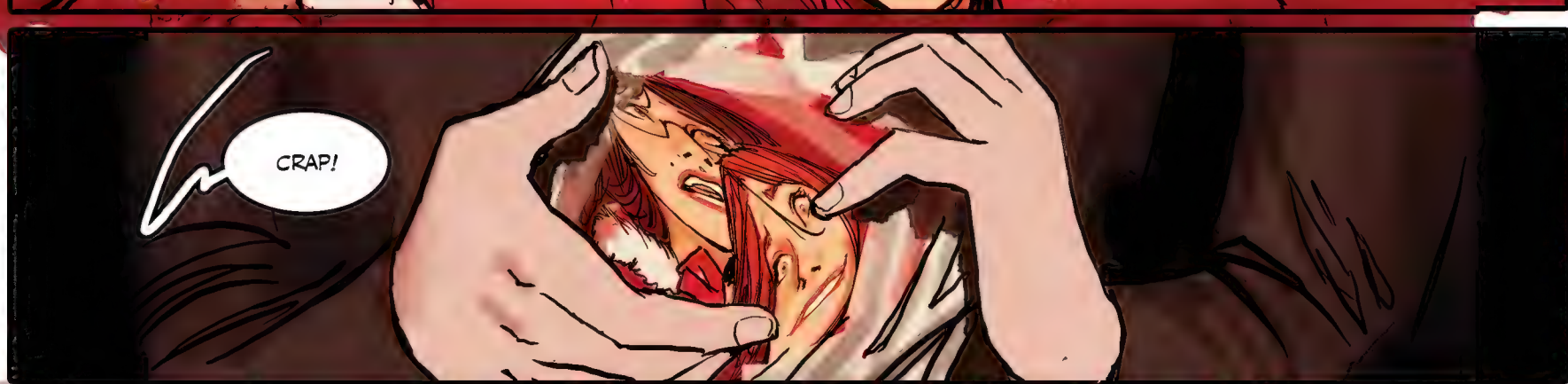
UGH!

DECEMBER 21ST.
WELL, I'M DONE FOR TODAY. I SHOULD PROBABLY GO...
AND DO WHAT? ELLIOT IS VISITING HER FAMILY; YOU ARE ALONE!
HEY, MY FOOD ARRIVED, AND ALSO, I HAVE THINGS TO DO!
KILLING THINGS IS THINGS TO DO, TOO!


WE'VE GOT THE DAILIES DONE! WE CAN KILL MORE STUFF TOMORROW!
WE DIDN'T DO THE HOLIDAY DUNGEON!
FOR BOOSTER CANDY? SINCE WHEN SO YOU CARE ABOUT THAT?
I DO...OH, GOD! WHAT ARE YOU EATING?
CRUNCH MUNCH SCRUNCH

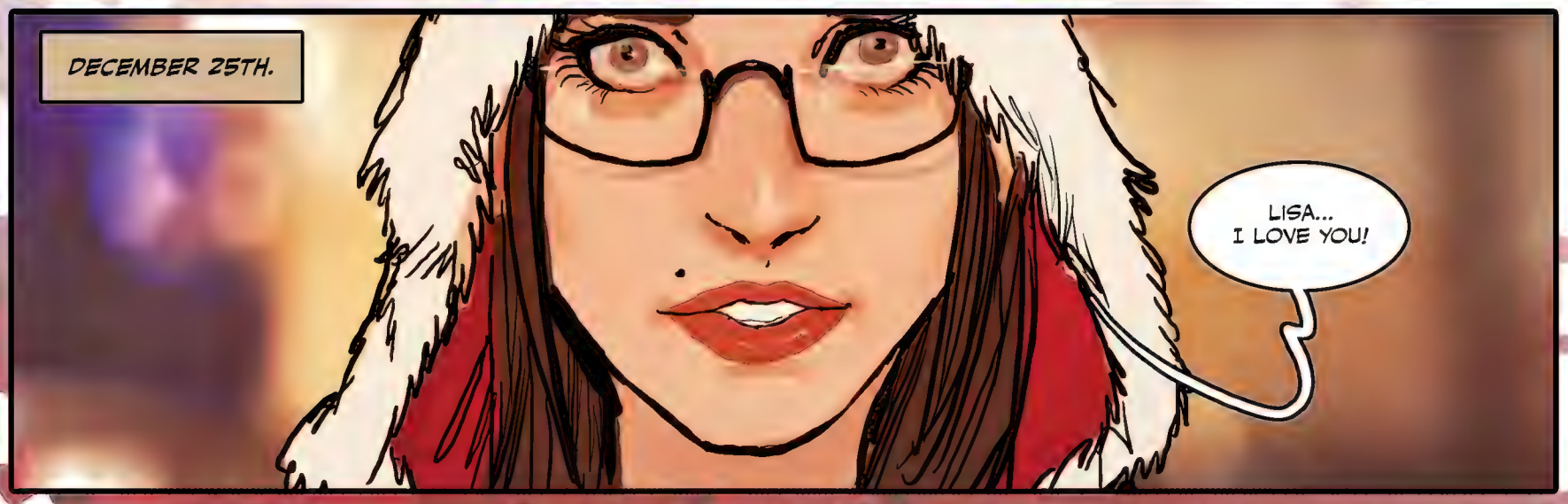

NEVER YOU MIND WHAT I'M EATING! WHY ARE YOU DESPERATE ENOUGH TO PLAY THE HOLIDAY DUNGEON?
I...NEED HELP KILLING SOME TIME, OKAY!?
TIL' WHAT?
MUNCH SCRUNCH
BUCKET O' CHICKEN FEET

DECEMBER 22ND.
SO WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF YOUR HYPOTHETICAL DOMME CONFESSED HYPOTHETICAL LOVE FOR YOU?
ASKING FOR A FRIEND!


CRAP!

DECEMBER 23RD.
SCREW IT! MAINTENANCE TIME!

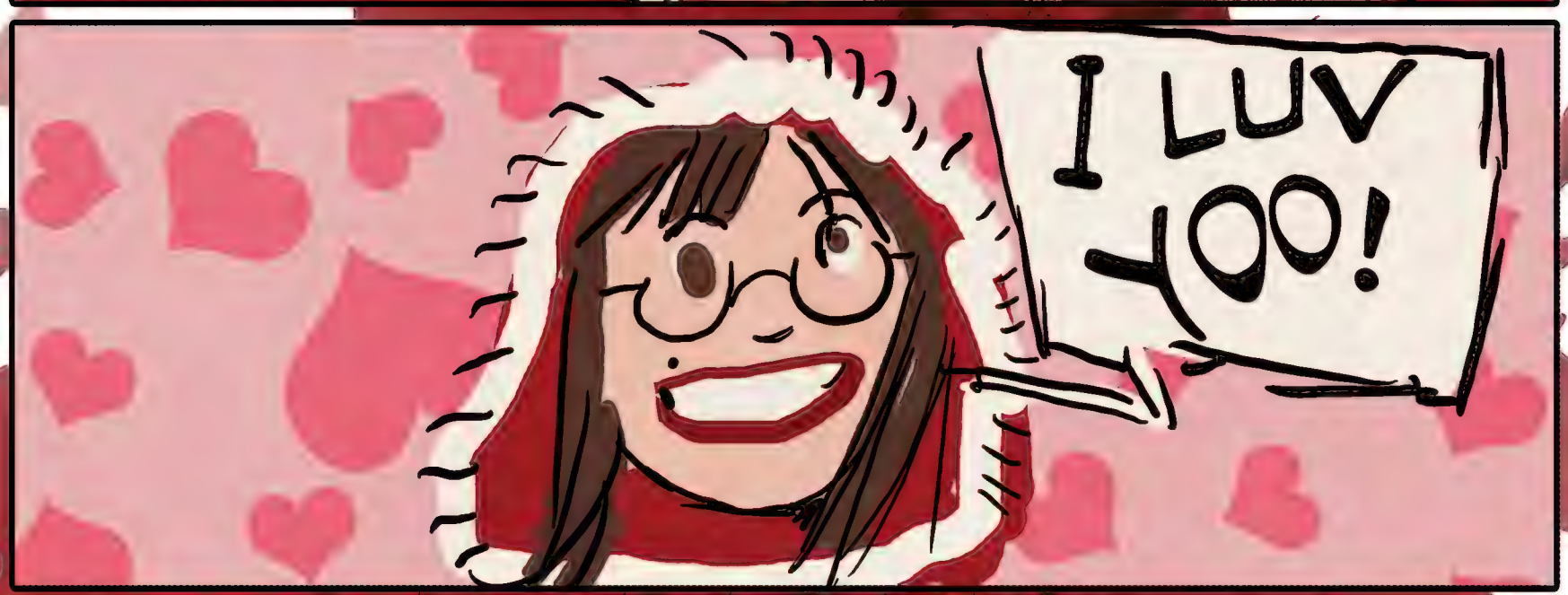
DECEMBER 24TH.
HMM... HOLIDAY BALLGAGS! THAT SHOULD BE A THING!


DECEMBER 25TH.
LISA... I LOVE YOU!

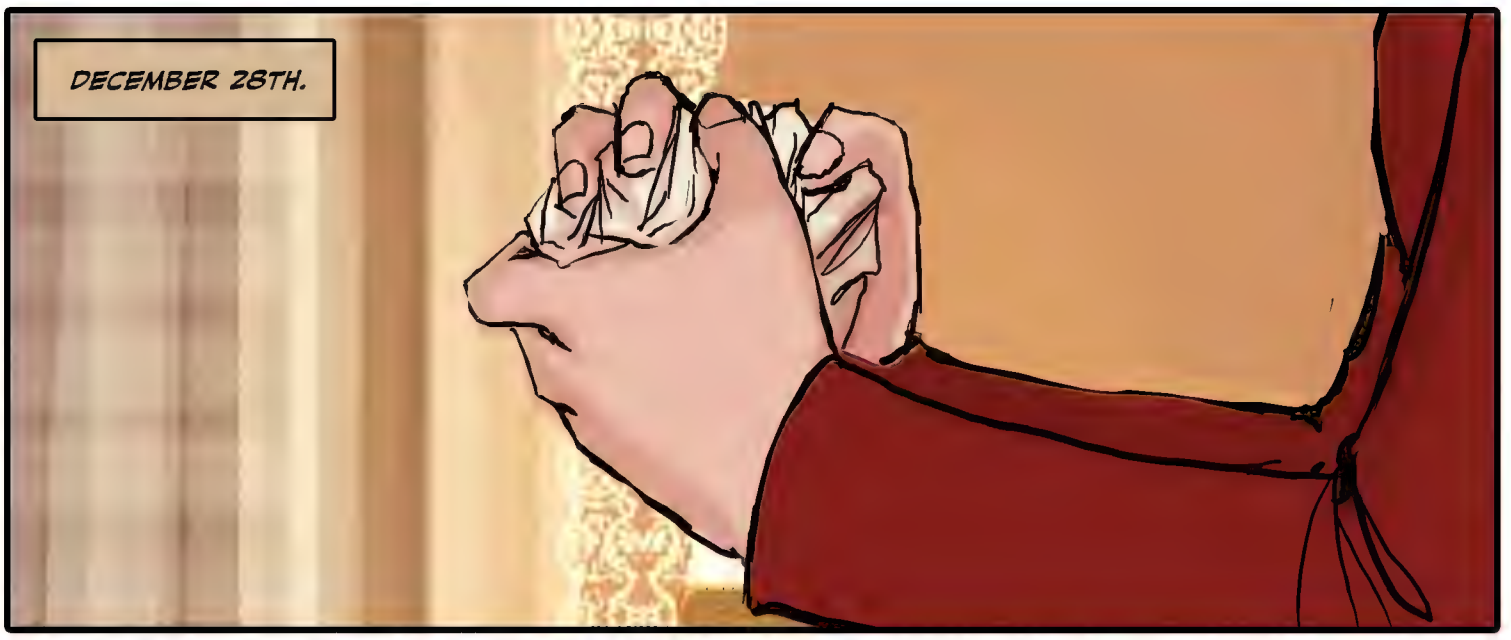
NOPE!

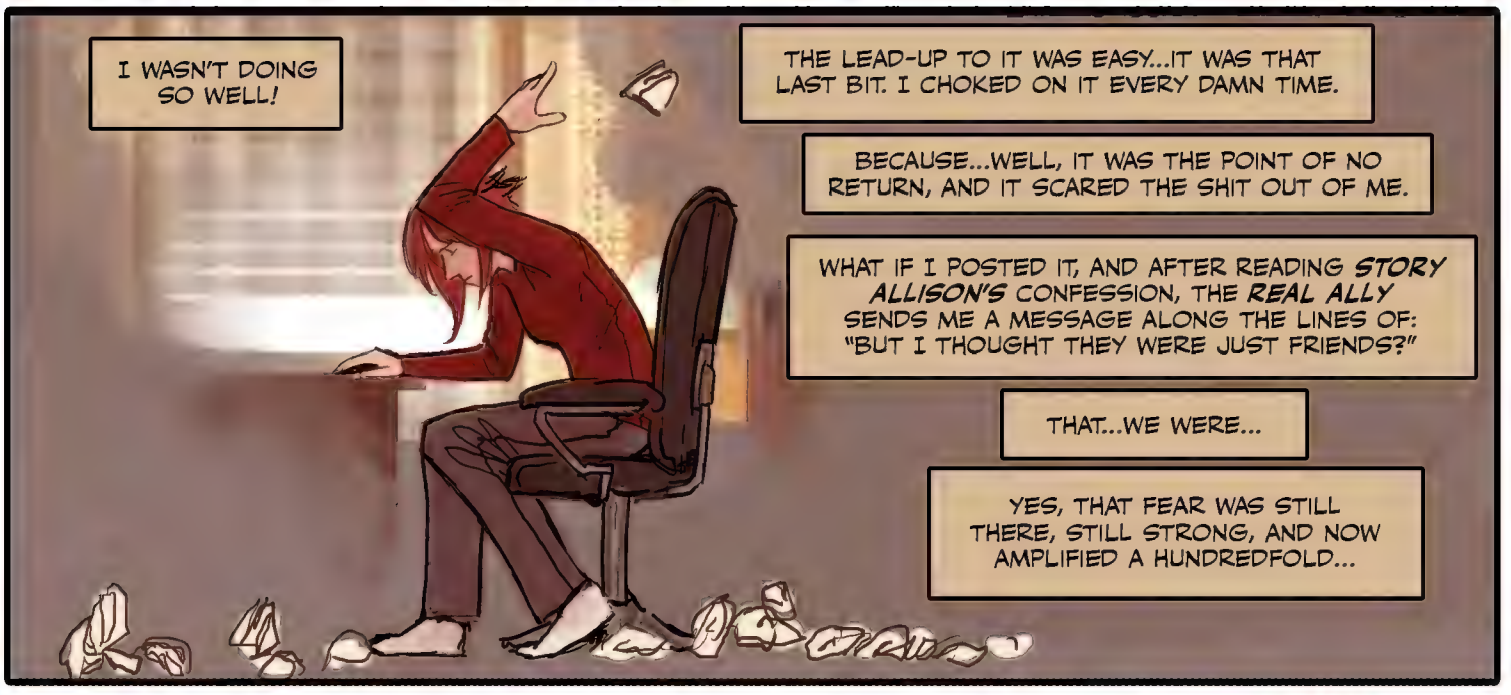
DECEMBER 26TH.

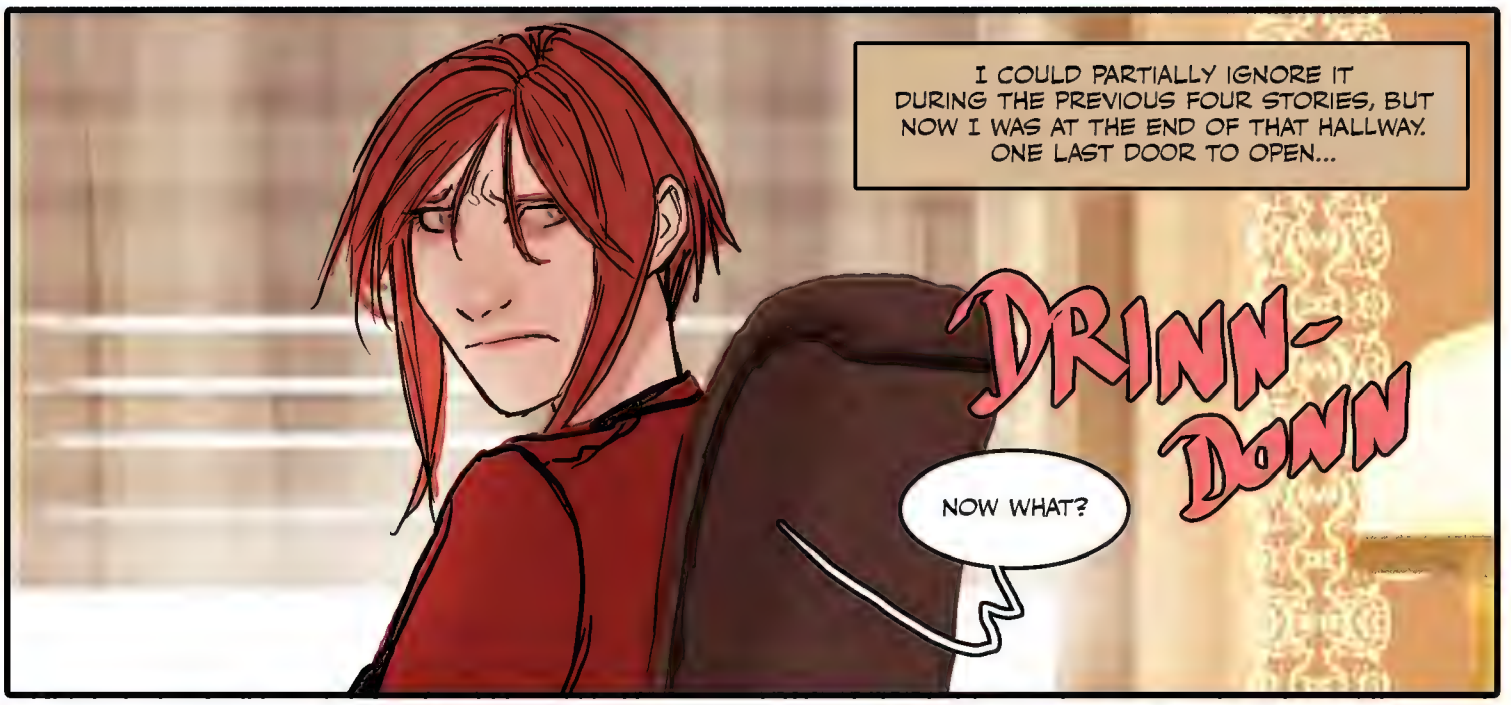
DECEMBER 27TH.

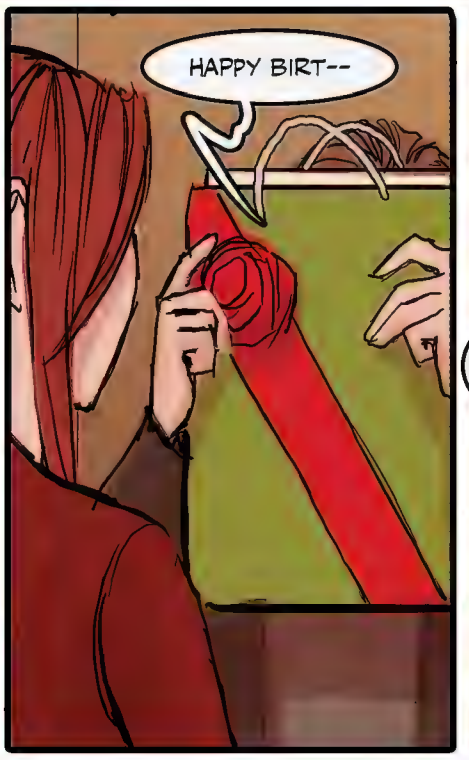

I LUV YOO!

I FUCKING SWEAR! I'M GETTING PROGRESSIVELY *WORSE* AT THIS!

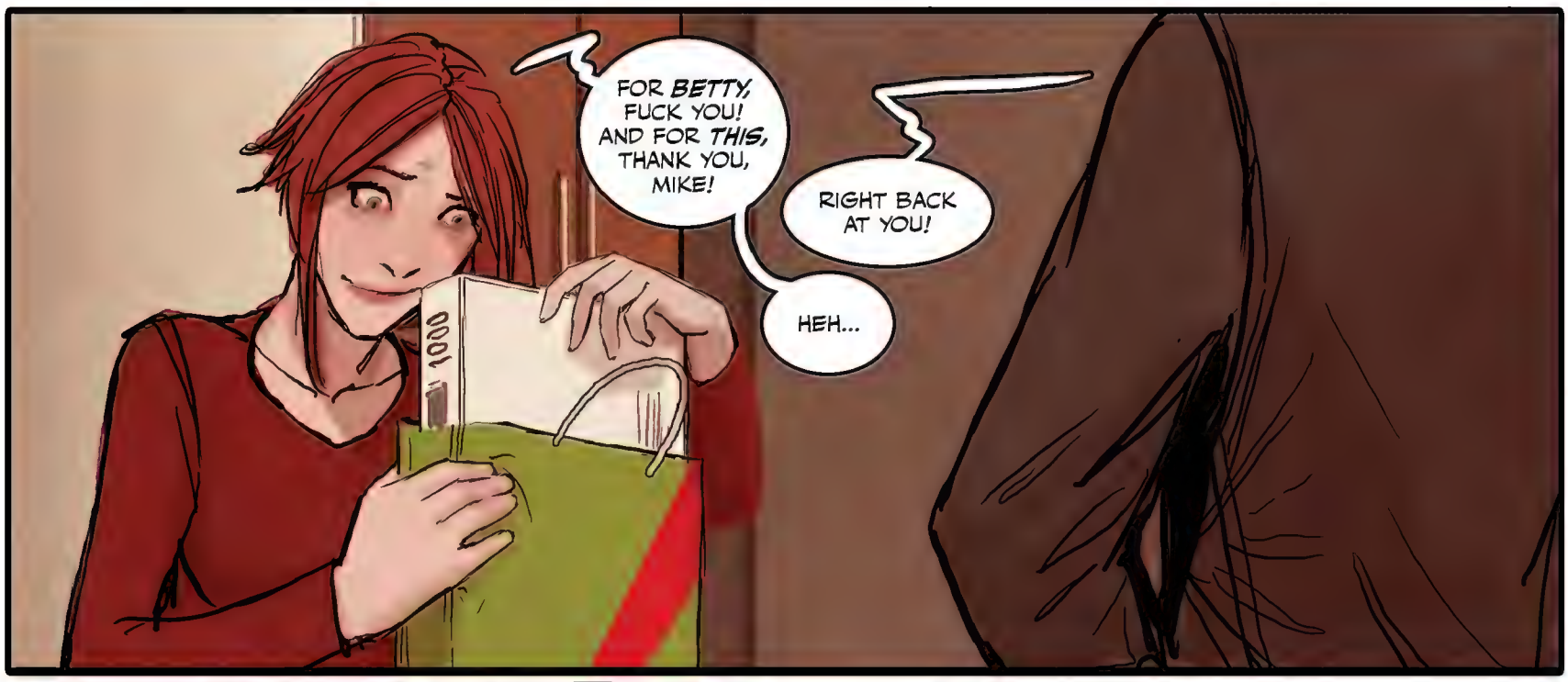

DECEMBER 28TH.


I WASN'T DOING SO WELL!
THE LEAD-UP TO IT WAS EASY...IT WAS THAT LAST BIT. I CHOKED ON IT EVERY DAMN TIME.
BECAUSE...WELL, IT WAS THE POINT OF NO RETURN, AND IT SCARED THE SHIT OUT OF ME.
WHAT IF I POSTED IT, AND AFTER READING STORY ALLISON'S CONFESSION, THE REAL ALLY SENDS ME A MESSAGE ALONG THE LINES OF: "BUT I THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST FRIENDS?"
THAT...WE WERE...
YES, THAT FEAR WAS STILL THERE, STILL STRONG, AND NOW AMPLIFIED A HUNDREDFOLD...


I COULD PARTIALLY IGNORE IT DURING THE PREVIOUS FOUR STORIES, BUT NOW I WAS AT THE END OF THAT HALLWAY. ONE LAST DOOR TO OPEN...
DRINN-DONN
NOW WHAT?


HAPPY BIRT--

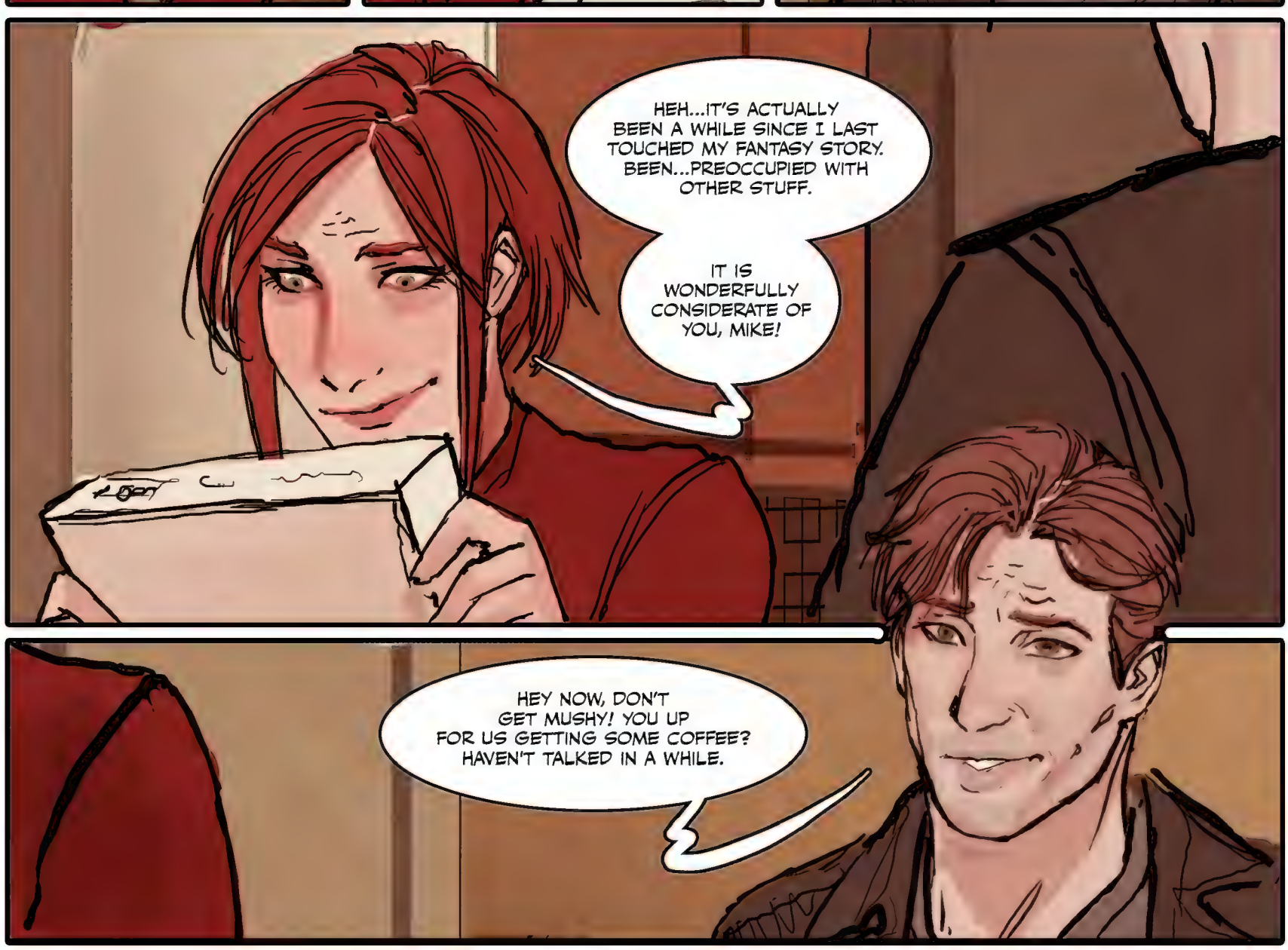
--SMASS?
SORRY FOR THE DELAY, BETTY!


FOR BETTY, FUCK YOU! AND FOR THIS, THANK YOU, MIKE!
RIGHT BACK AT YOU!
HEH...

A JIGSAW... HEH, YOU KNOW ME WELL!

WHAT'S WITH THE DRAGON THEME, THOUGH?

WELL, YOU WRITE FANTASY, RIGHT?
I FIGURED, FANTASY? DRAGONS? FIERY, SNAP-OFFISH PERSONALITY? I DON'T KNOW, THE WHOLE THING JUST SCREAMS BETTY!


HEH...IT'S ACTUALLY BEEN A WHILE SINCE I LAST TOUCHED MY FANTASY STORY. BEEN...PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER STUFF.
IT IS WONDERFULLY CONSIDERATE OF YOU, MIKE!
HEY NOW, DON'T GET MUSHY! YOU UP FOR US GETTING SOME COFFEE? HAVEN'T TALKED IN A WHILE.

SURE...UH... BUT OUTSIDE. THIS PLACE IS A BIT...
DUMPSTER FIRE?
CREATIVELY MESSY!

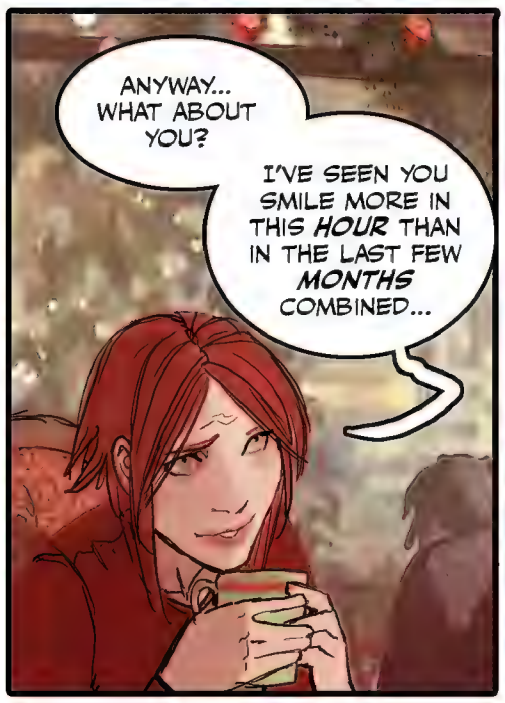
SO, NO DECORATIONS AT YOUR PLACE?
I'VE BEEN BUSY...

YOU NEVER TOLD ME...WELL, I MEAN, YOU TOLD ME NOT TO ASK...

ALLISON?
YEAH.

LONG STORY I'D RATHER NOT TELL...

AT LEAST... NOT UNTIL I FIGURE OUT HOW IT ENDS.


ANYWAY... WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I'VE SEEN YOU SMILE MORE IN THIS HOUR THAN IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS COMBINED...

YEAH, WELL, A FUCKED-UP YEAR DONE UNFUCKED ITSELF BEFORE ITS END.

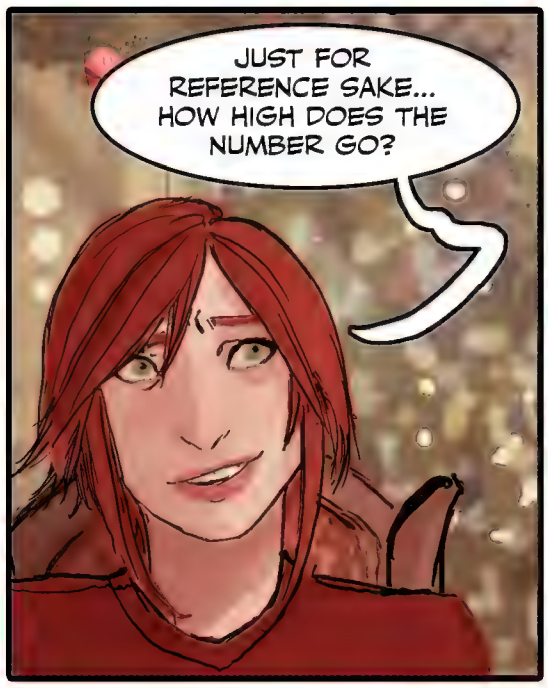
OKAY?

ELAINE AND I...WE'RE GOING TO SEE A MARRIAGE COUNSELOR.

WOW!
WHAT?

NOTHING...JUST, I DON'T KNOW, I GUESS I'VE SEEN TOO MANY BAD TV SHOWS. YOU DON'T SEE MANY GUYS SAYING THOSE WORDS WITH A SMILE.

WELL...I'VE GOT MY REASONS...
I TOLD YOU A BIT ABOUT MY MARITAL ISSUES... BUT IF I WAS TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, IT WAS LESS "ISSUES" AND MORE A "CATEGORY SIX CLUSTERFUCK!"

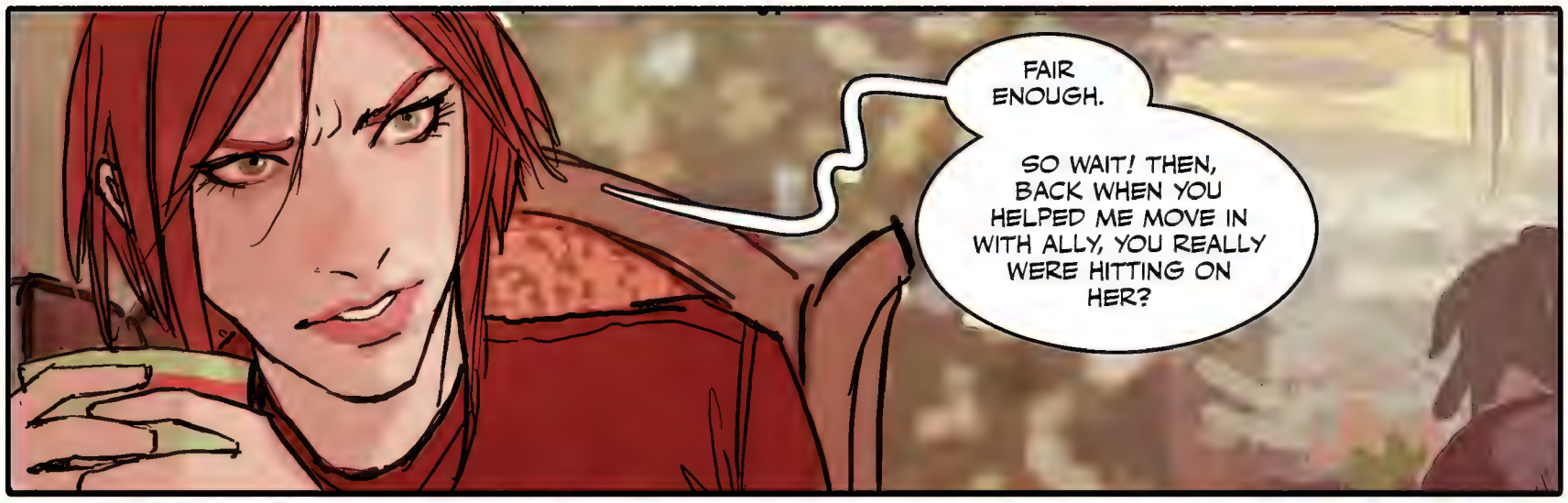

JUST FOR REFERENCE SAKE... HOW HIGH DOES THE NUMBER GO?

FIVE.
OH...
YEAH.

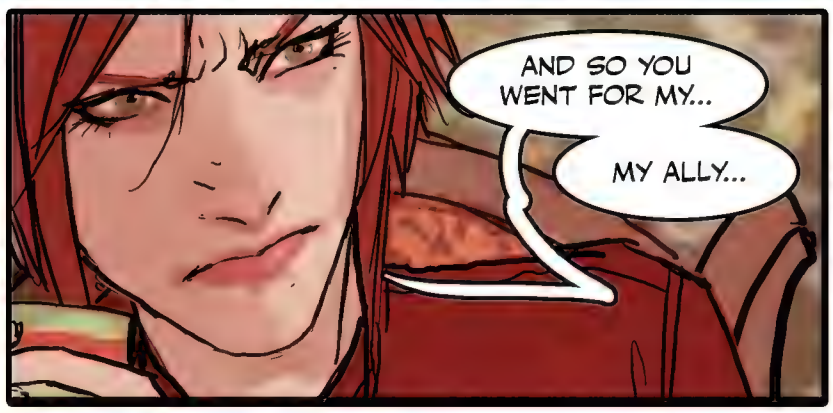
YOU WANNA KNOW HOW BAD IT GOT?
OPEN MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS BAD!

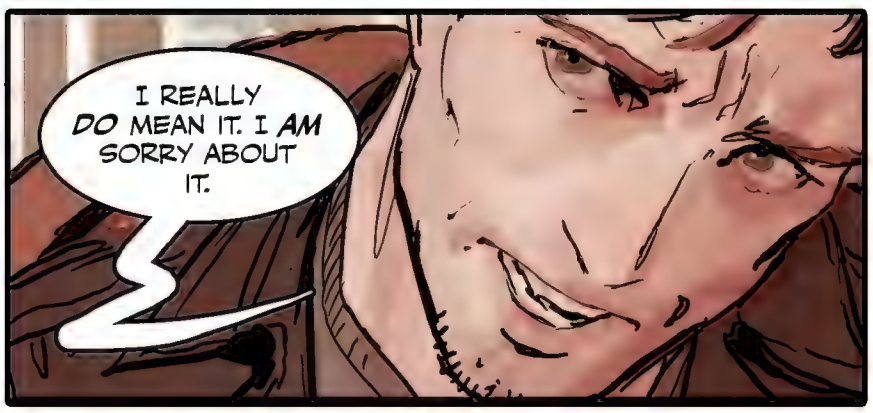
WELL...I DON'T KNOW, I MEAN SOME PEOPLE MAKE IT WORK.

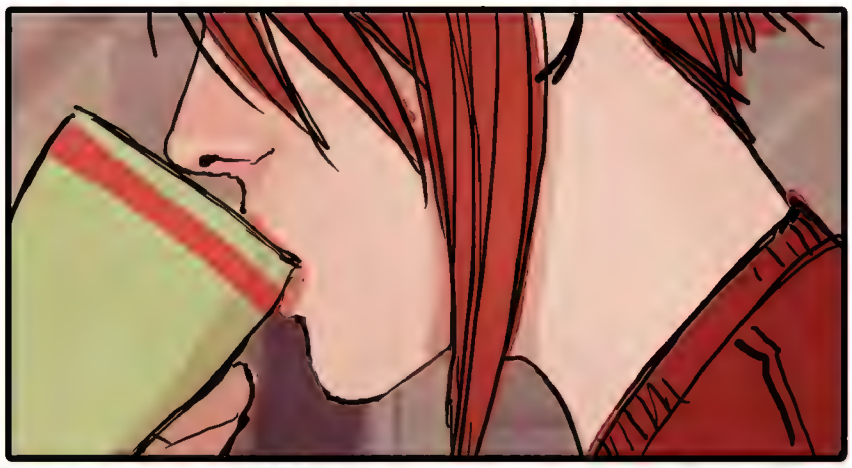
YEAH, MAYBE! BUT, LISA, WE WE WERE HAVING PROBLEMS MAKING A REGULAR MARRIAGE WORK.

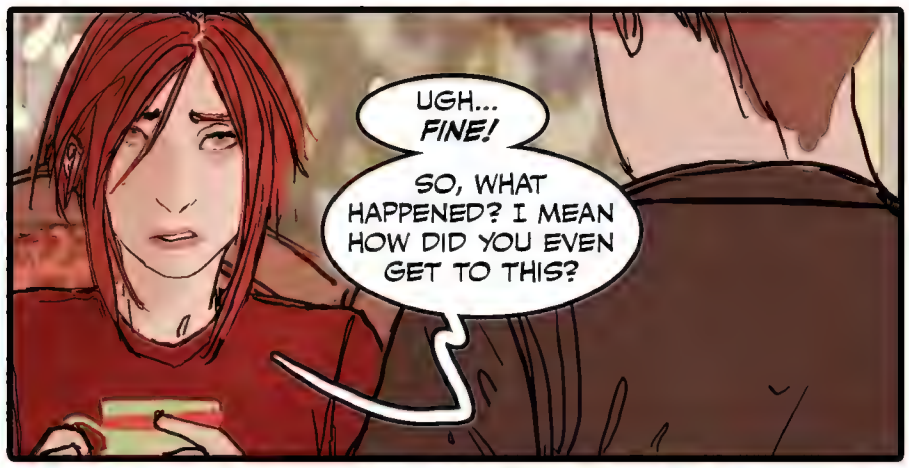

FAIR ENOUGH.
SO WAIT! THEN, BACK WHEN YOU HELPED ME MOVE IN WITH ALLY, YOU REALLY WERE HITTING ON HER?

YEAH...
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT.
LIKE I SAID... OPEN MARRIAGE. DUMB DECISIONS ALL AROUND.


AND SO YOU WENT FOR MY...
MY ALLY...


I REALLY DO MEAN IT. I AM SORRY ABOUT IT.

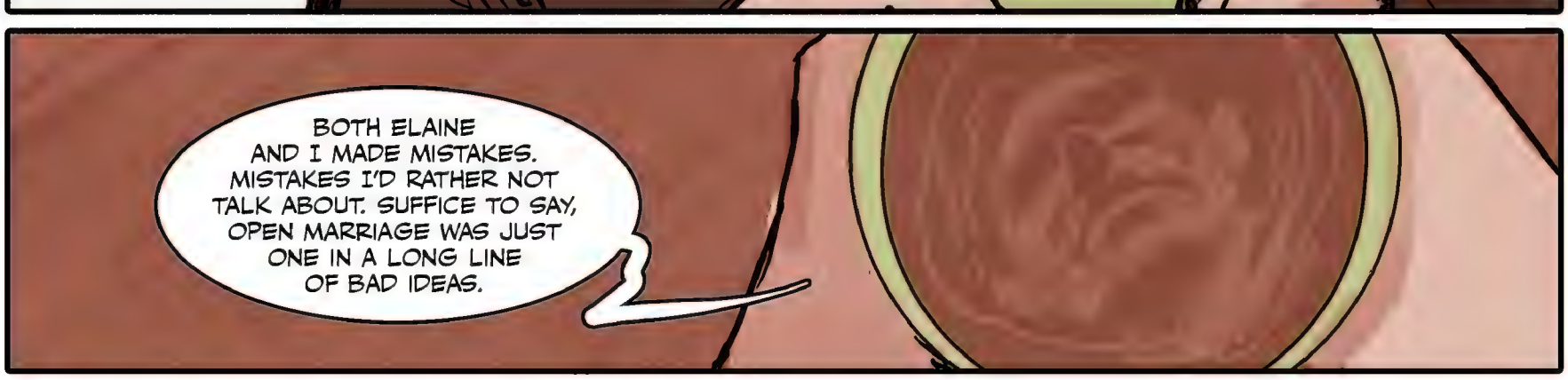


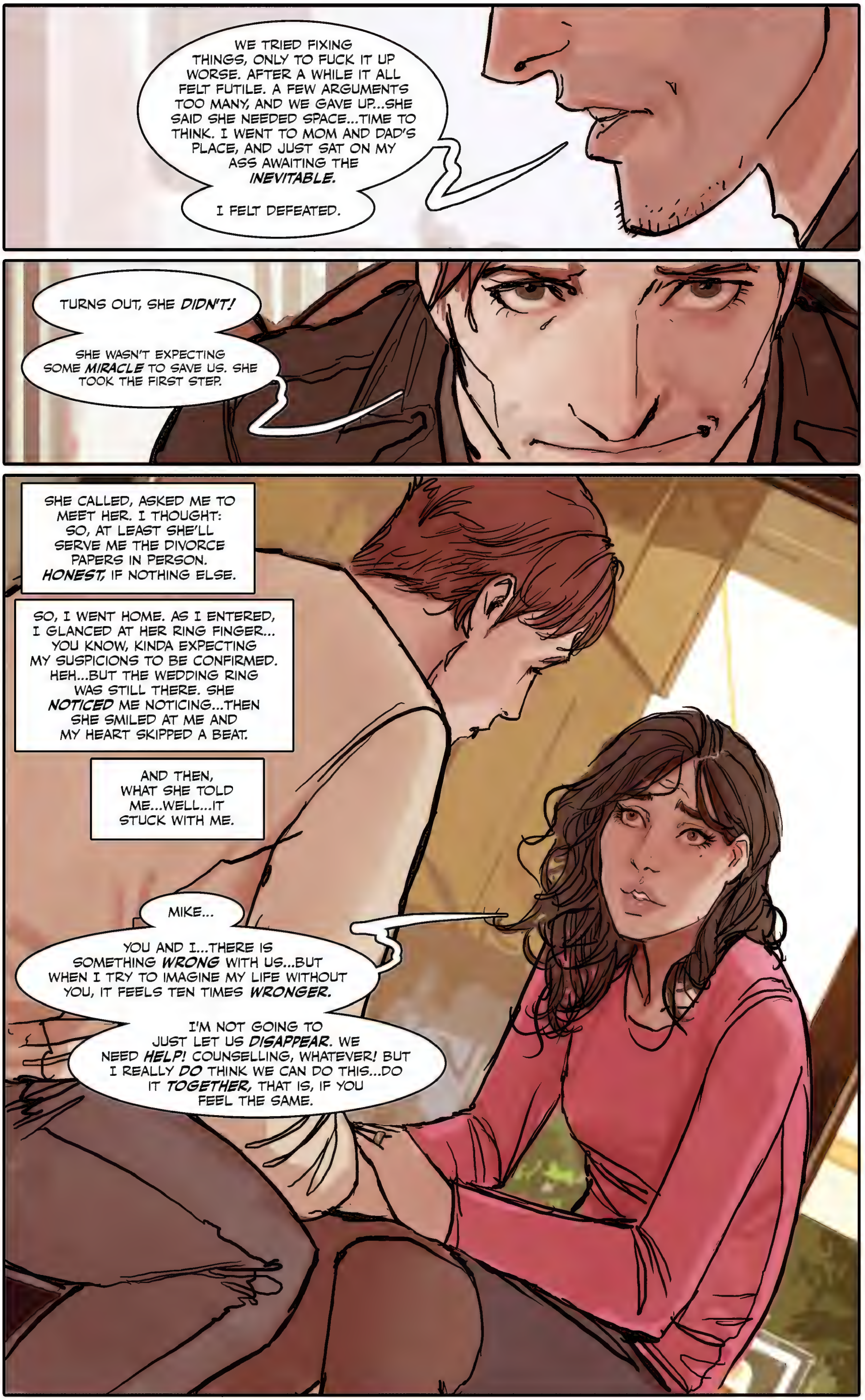

UGH... FINE!
SO, WHAT HAPPENED? I MEAN HOW DID YOU EVEN GET TO THIS?

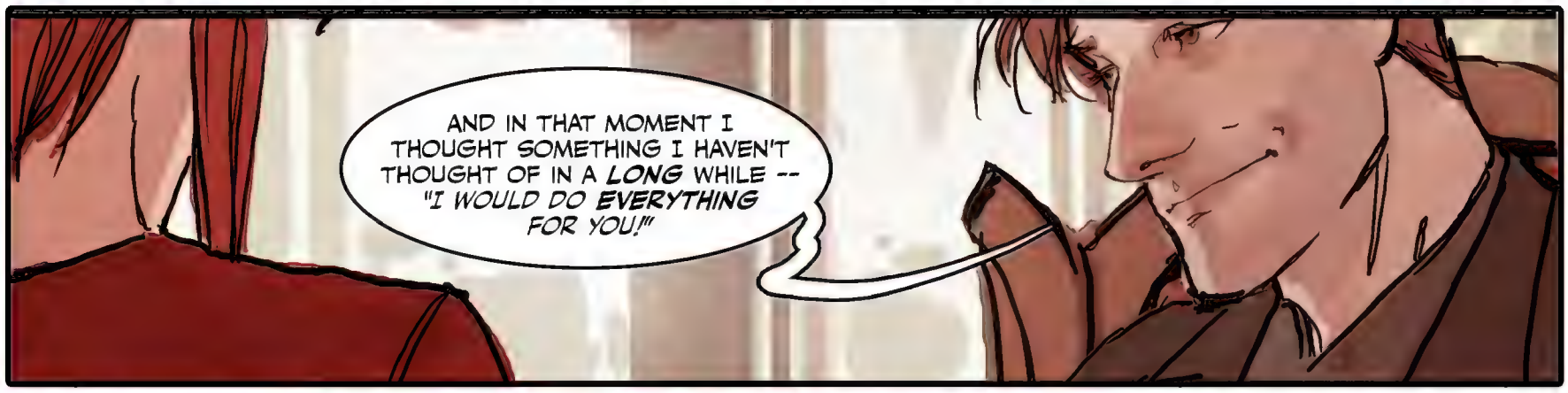
SMALL THINGS.
A WHOLE LOT OF SMALL THINGS HAPPENED.

THAT'S THE THING WITH MARRIAGE...
YOU'RE BOTH USUALLY BRACING FOR THE BIG THINGS. BIG PROBLEMS...
BUT IT'S THE SMALL STUFF THAT WILL GET TO YOU. SMALL SHIT SNEAKS UNDER YOUR RADAR. AND IT STOCKPILES! YOU LEAVE ENOUGH SMALL ISSUES UNRESOLVED AND...

I DON'T KNOW... THE MOOD CHANGES. IT'S NOT THE SAME MARRIAGE ANYMORE.
YOU ARE... WEAKENED. AND THAT'S WHEN THE BIG THINGS COME TO CRUSH YOU.


BOTH ELAINE AND I MADE MISTAKES. MISTAKES I'D RATHER NOT TALK ABOUT. SUFFICE TO SAY, OPEN MARRIAGE WAS JUST ONE IN A LONG LINE OF BAD IDEAS.

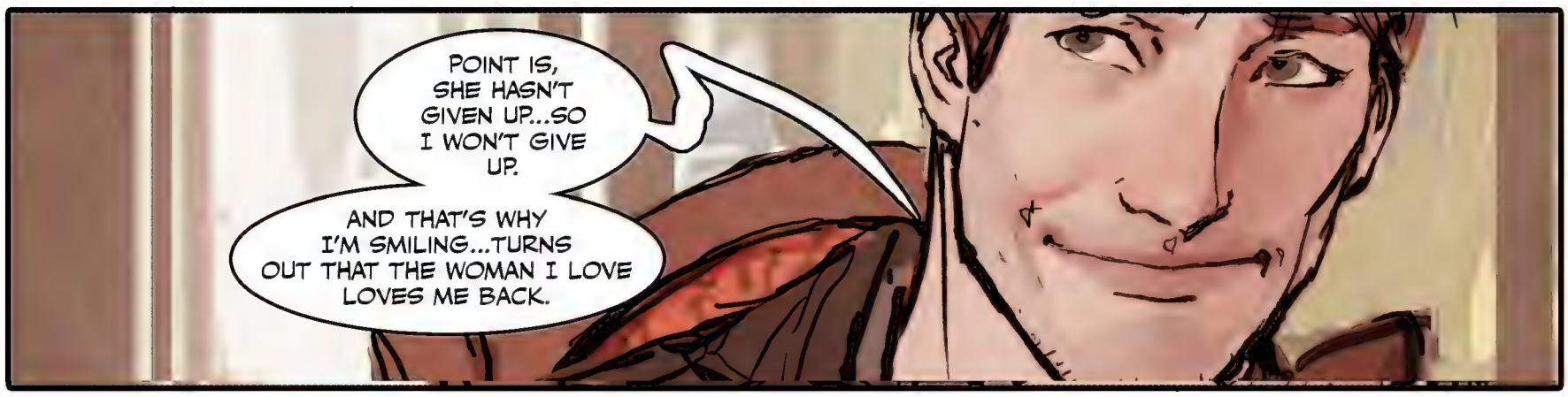

WE TRIED FIXING THINGS, ONLY TO FUCK IT UP WORSE. AFTER A WHILE IT ALL FELT FUTILE. A FEW ARGUMENTS TOO MANY, AND WE GAVE UP...SHE SAID SHE NEEDED SPACE...TIME TO THINK. I WENT TO MOM AND DAD'S PLACE, AND JUST SAT ON MY ASS AWAITING THE *INEVITABLE.*
I FELT DEFEATED.
TURNS OUT, SHE *DIDN'T!*
SHE WASN'T EXPECTING SOME *MIRACLE* TO SAVE US. SHE TOOK THE FIRST STEP.
SHE CALLED, ASKED ME TO MEET HER. I THOUGHT: SO, AT LEAST SHE'LL SERVE ME THE DIVORCE PAPERS IN PERSON. *HONEST,* IF NOTHING ELSE.
SO, I WENT HOME. AS I ENTERED, I GLANCED AT HER RING FINGER... YOU KNOW, KINDA EXPECTING MY SUSPICIONS TO BE CONFIRMED. HEH...BUT THE WEDDING RING WAS STILL THERE. SHE *NOTICED* ME NOTICING...THEN SHE SMILED AT ME AND MY HEART SKIPPED A BEAT.
AND THEN, WHAT SHE TOLD ME...WELL...IT STUCK WITH ME.
MIKE...
YOU AND I...THERE IS SOMETHING *WRONG* WITH US...BUT WHEN I TRY TO IMAGINE MY LIFE WITHOUT YOU, IT FEELS TEN TIMES *WRONGER.*
I'M NOT GOING TO JUST LET US *DISAPPEAR.* WE NEED *HELP!* COUNSELLING, WHATEVER! BUT I REALLY *DO* THINK WE CAN DO THIS...DO IT *TOGETHER,* THAT IS, IF YOU FEEL THE SAME.


AND IN THAT MOMENT I THOUGHT SOMETHING I HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF IN A *LONG* WHILE -- "*I WOULD DO **EVERYTHING** FOR YOU!*"

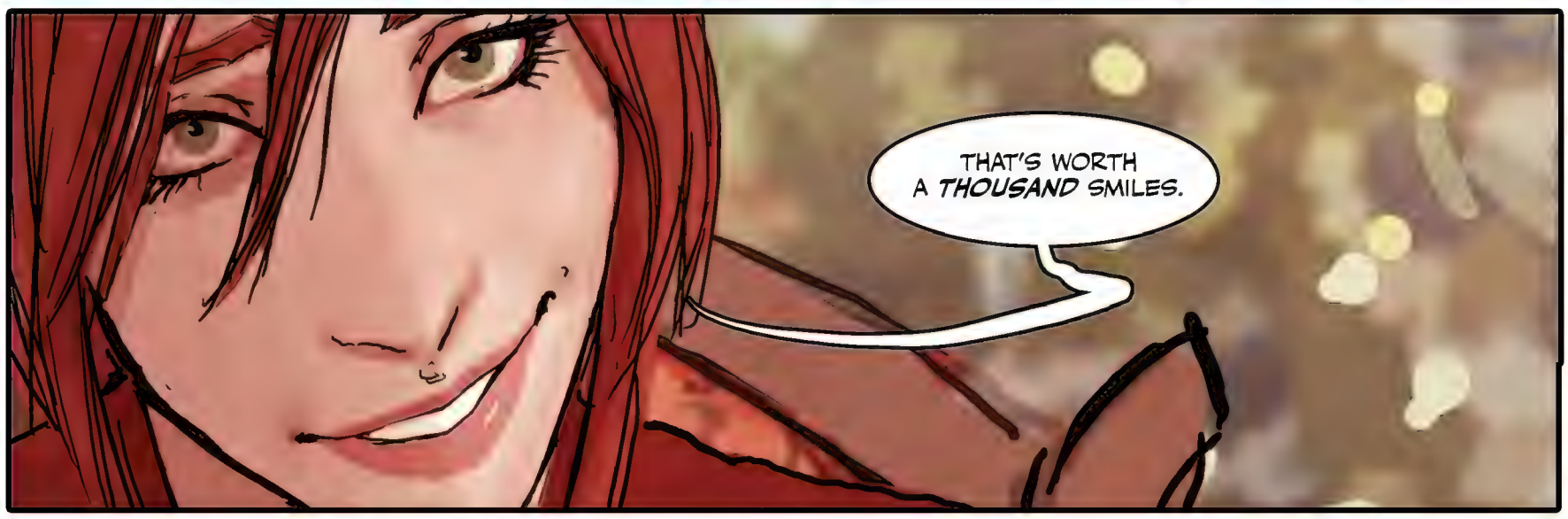
DID YOU *TELL* HER THAT?

WELL...IT SOUNDED MORE ALONG THE LINES OF "UHHH -- OKAY"
DAMN IT, MIKE!
POT, KETTLE?

HEY! YOU'RE THE WRITER IN THE FAMILY!

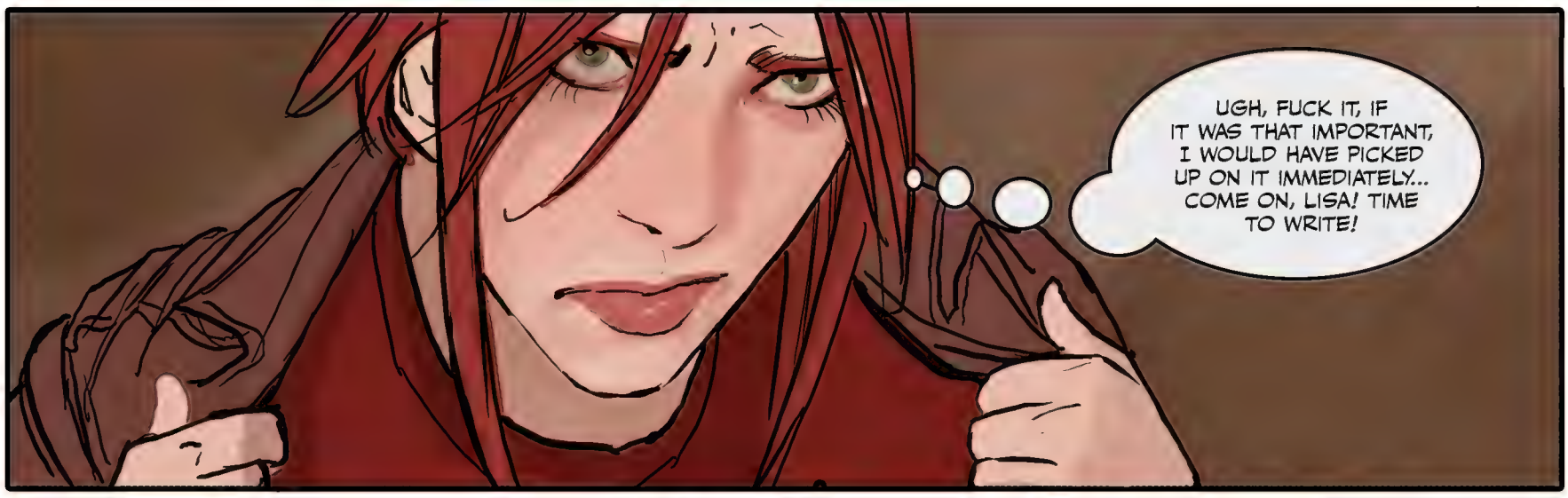

POINT IS, SHE HASN'T GIVEN UP...SO I WON'T GIVE UP.
AND THAT'S WHY I'M SMILING...TURNS OUT THAT THE WOMAN I LOVE LOVES ME BACK.

WELL... THAT'S WORTH A SMILE...

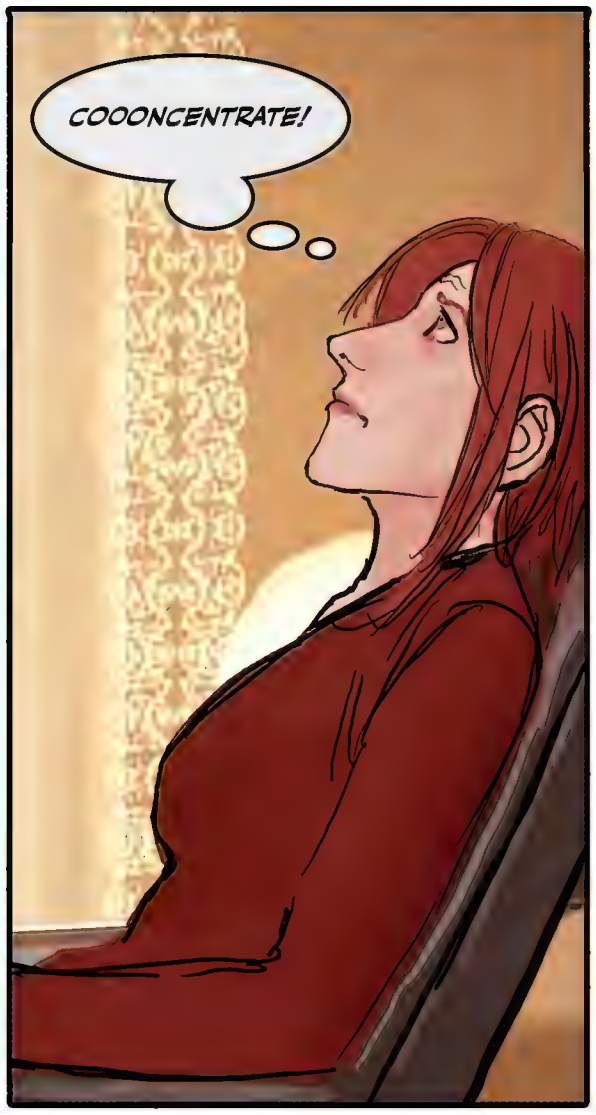

THAT'S WORTH A *THOUSAND* SMILES.

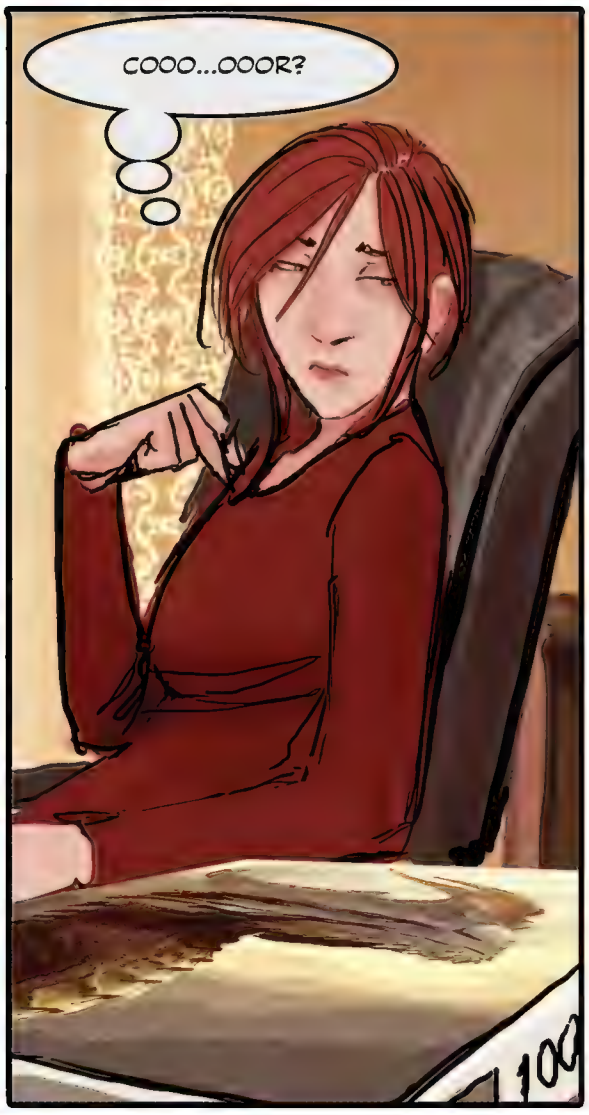
I WAS *HAPPY* FOR MIKE.
AND YET, I FELT ODDLY BOTHERED AS I WALKED HOME THAT DAY.
ALL THE HOLIDAY CHEER AROUND ME, AND YET I WAS COMPLETELY UNAFFECTED BY IT.
MY MIND WAS TOO CONCERNED RERUNNING OUR CONVERSATION OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
IT WAS SOMETHING HE SAID...
AND I COULDN'T PINPOINT *WHAT* FOR THE LIFE OF ME.

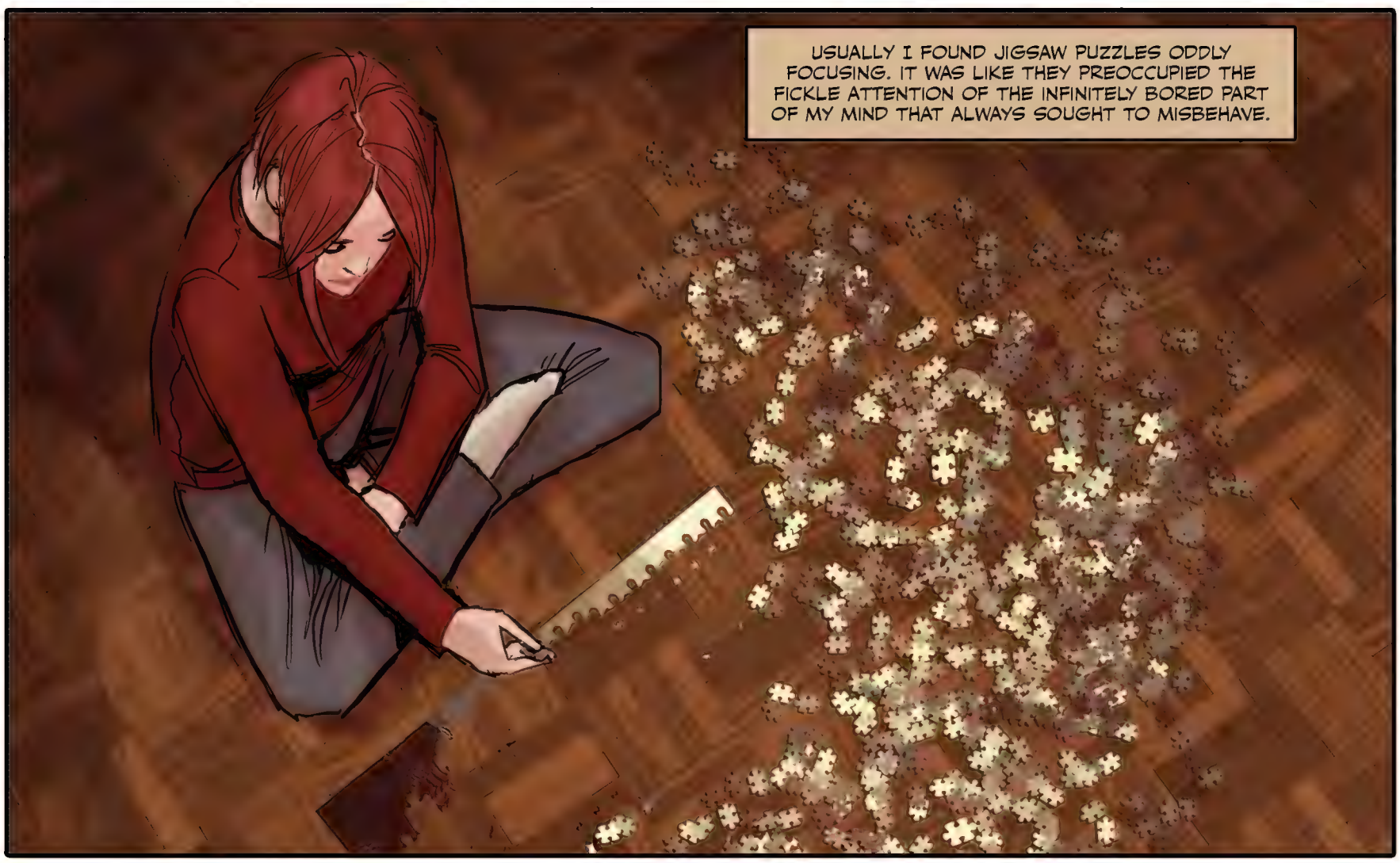
ALL I KNEW WAS IT FELT *IMPORTANT!*


UGH, FUCK IT, IF IT WAS THAT IMPORTANT, I WOULD HAVE PICKED UP ON IT IMMEDIATELY... COME ON, LISA! TIME TO WRITE!

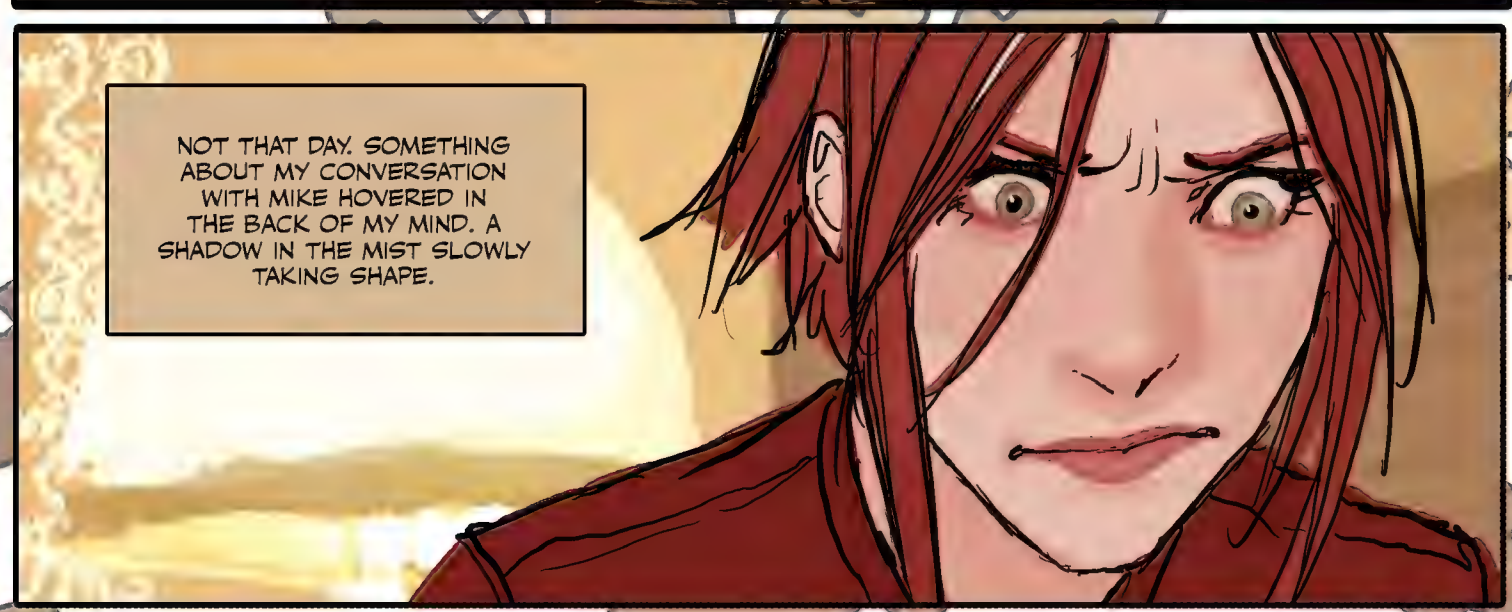
NOW, GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME!!

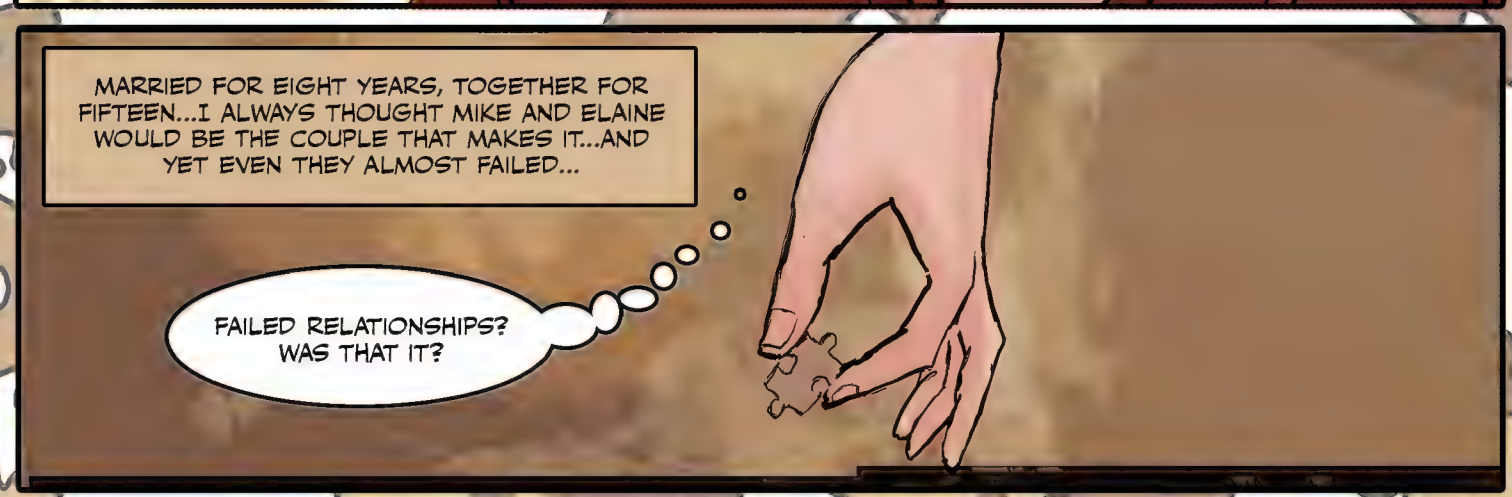

COOONCENTRATE!


COOO...OOOR?

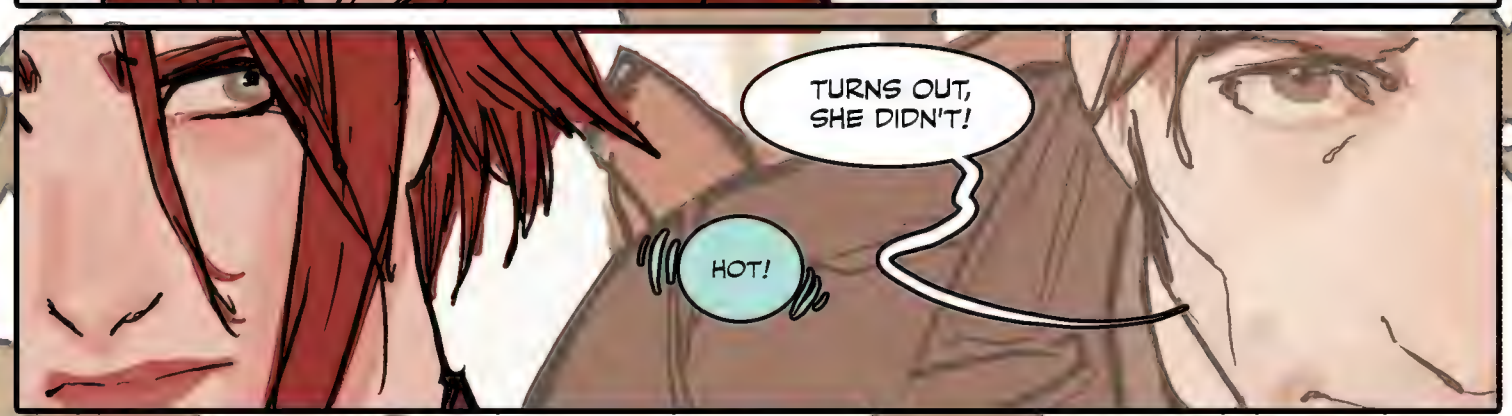

USUALLY I FOUND JIGSAW PUZZLES ODDLY FOCUSING. IT WAS LIKE THEY PREOCCUPIED THE FICKLE ATTENTION OF THE INFINITELY BORED PART OF MY MIND THAT ALWAYS SOUGHT TO MISBEHAVE.

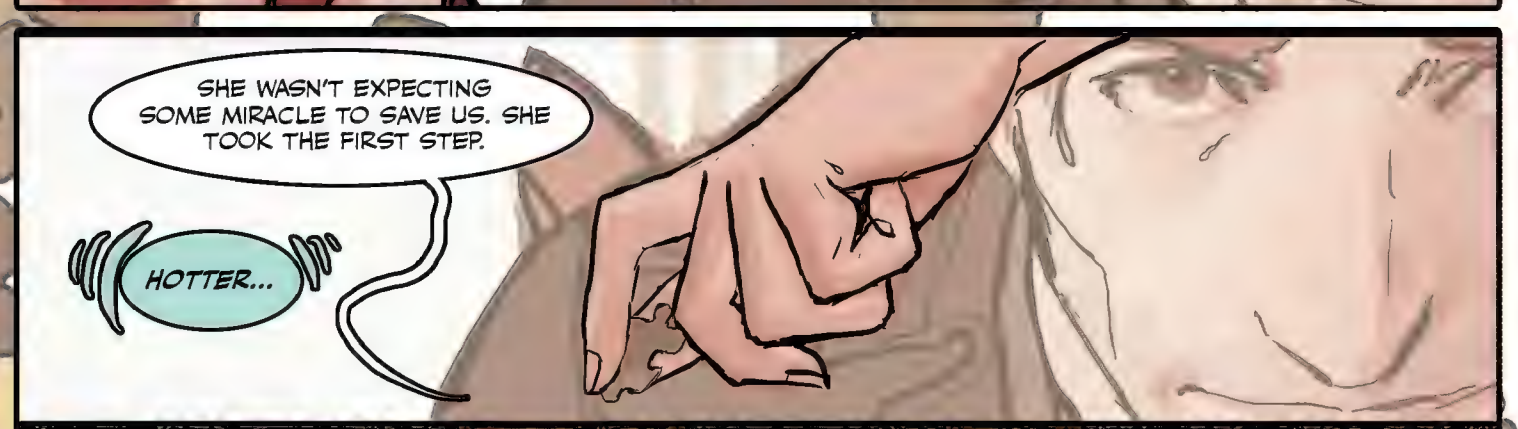
THIS LEFT MY *WRITING* MIND AT PEACE, ABLE TO PROBLEM-SOLVE.


NOT THAT DAY. SOMETHING ABOUT MY CONVERSATION WITH MIKE HOVERED IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. A SHADOW IN THE MIST SLOWLY TAKING SHAPE.


MARRIED FOR EIGHT YEARS, TOGETHER FOR FIFTEEN...I ALWAYS THOUGHT MIKE AND ELAINE WOULD BE THE COUPLE THAT MAKES IT...AND YET EVEN THEY ALMOST FAILED...
FAILED RELATIONSHIPS? WAS THAT IT?

NO.
IT WAS SOMETHING ELSE!
SOMETHING MIKE SAID...
I FELT DEFEATED.
WARM!


TURNS OUT, SHE DIDN'T!
HOT!

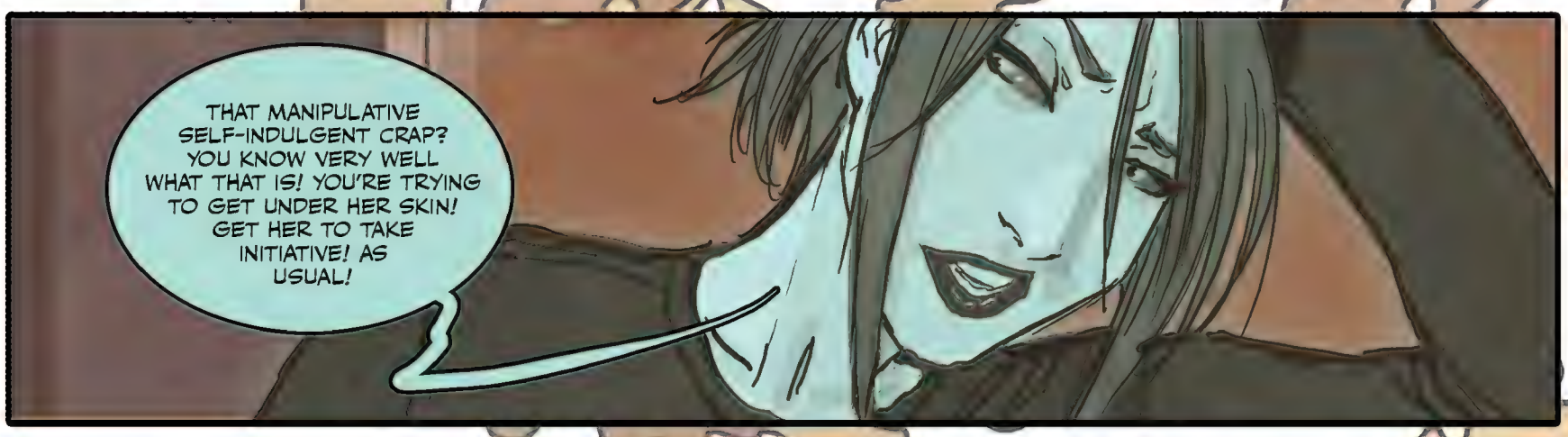

SHE WASN'T EXPECTING SOME MIRACLE TO SAVE US. SHE TOOK THE FIRST STEP.
HOTTER...

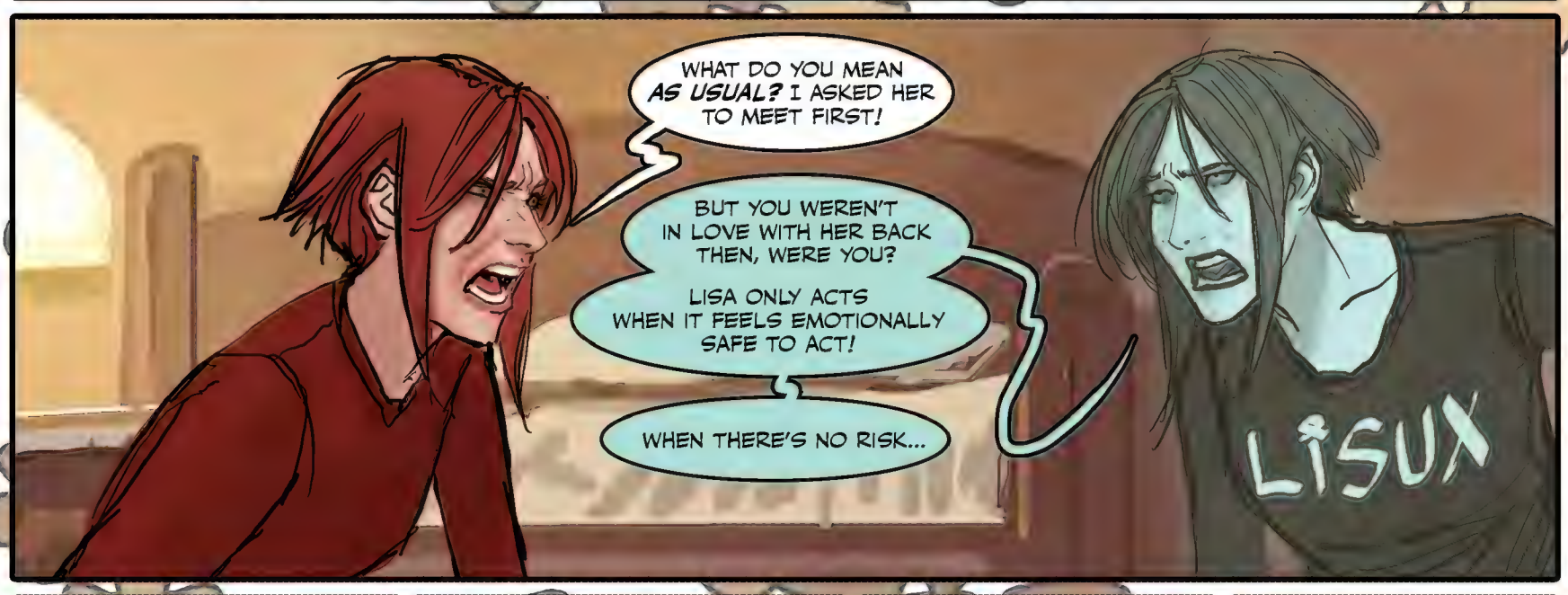
AND, IN THAT MOMENT, AN ODD SENSE OF GUILT AWAKENED A SIDE OF ME THAT I NEVER LIKED.
THEN AGAIN, THE DISLIKE WAS MUTUAL...
EXPECTING...
THERMO-NUCLEAR!
WELL WELL, LISA! LONG TIME NO SEE!
SO...THIS? WELL, THIS IS HOW I IMAGINE MY SELF-LOATHING.

NO... IT CAN'T BE THAT!
NO, IT CAN'T BE THAT!
TURNS OUT MY SELF-LOATHING IS ABOUT 60% HIGH SCHOOL MEAN GIRL.

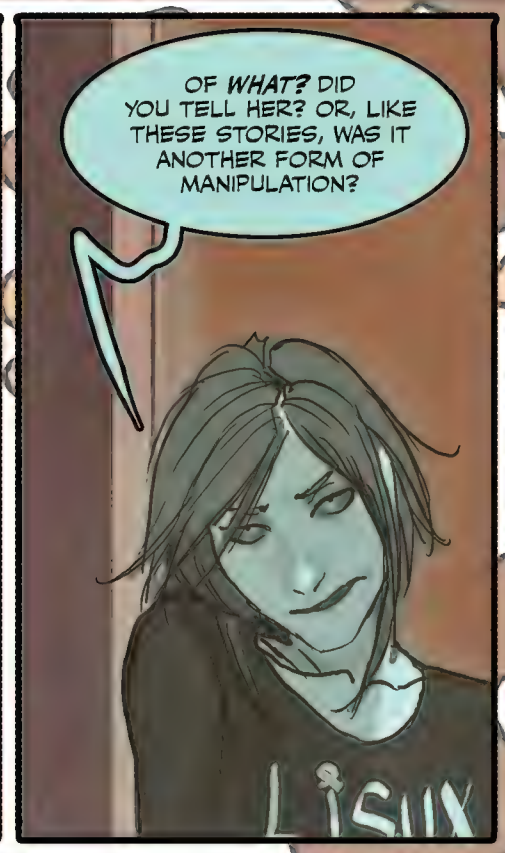
I WASN'T JUST SITTING AROUND EXPECTING ALLY TO...
NO! OF COURSE NOT! SOMETIMES YOU WERE LYING DOWN!

I...I WAS DOING THINGS. I AM DOING THINGS! WRITING STORIES TO GET HER TO READ!
GET HER TO... TO UNDERSTAND!


THAT MANIPULATIVE SELF-INDULGENT CRAP? YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT THAT IS! YOU'RE TRYING TO GET UNDER HER SKIN! GET HER TO TAKE INITIATIVE! AS USUAL!

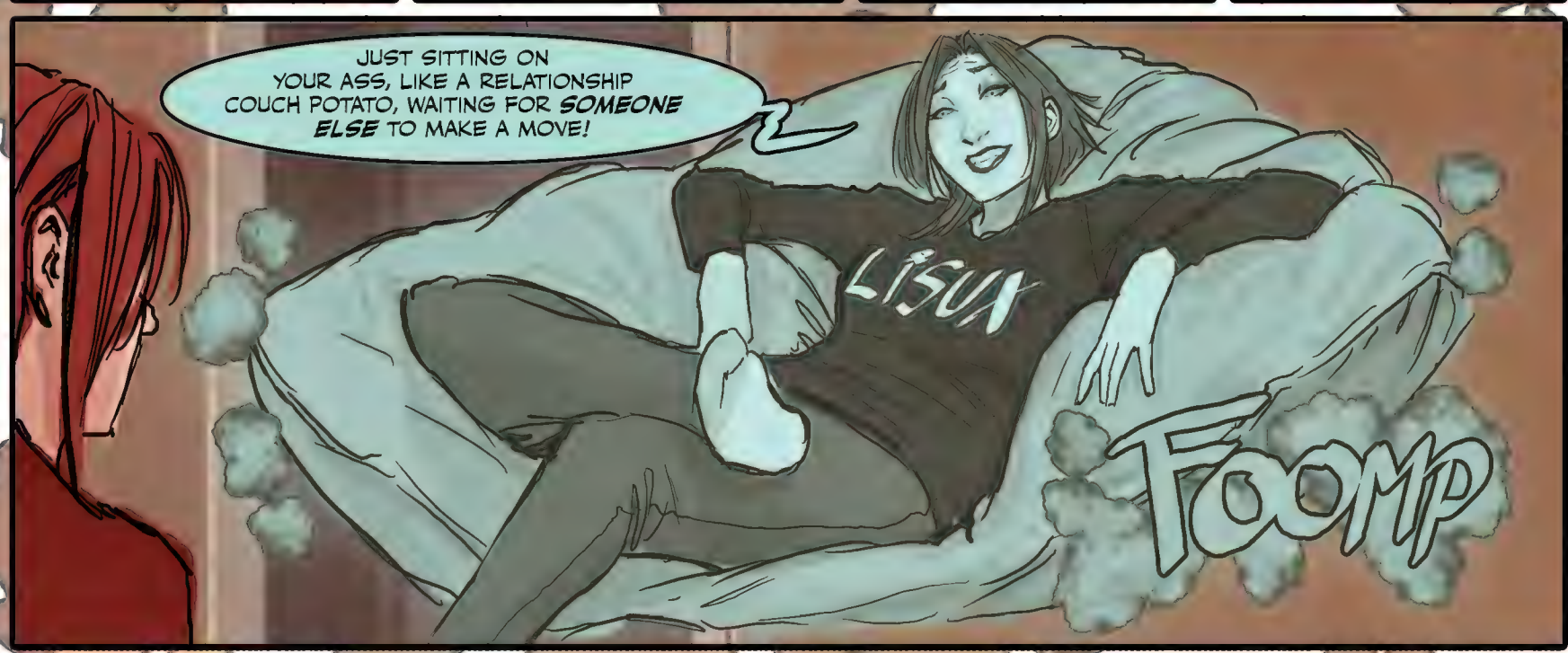

WHAT DO YOU MEAN *AS USUAL?* I ASKED HER TO MEET FIRST!
BUT YOU WEREN'T IN LOVE WITH HER BACK THEN, WERE YOU?
LISA ONLY ACTS WHEN IT FEELS EMOTIONALLY SAFE TO ACT!
WHEN THERE'S NO RISK...
LISUX

FUCK YOU! I PIERCED MY NIPPLES FOR HER! THAT WAS A SIGN OF..

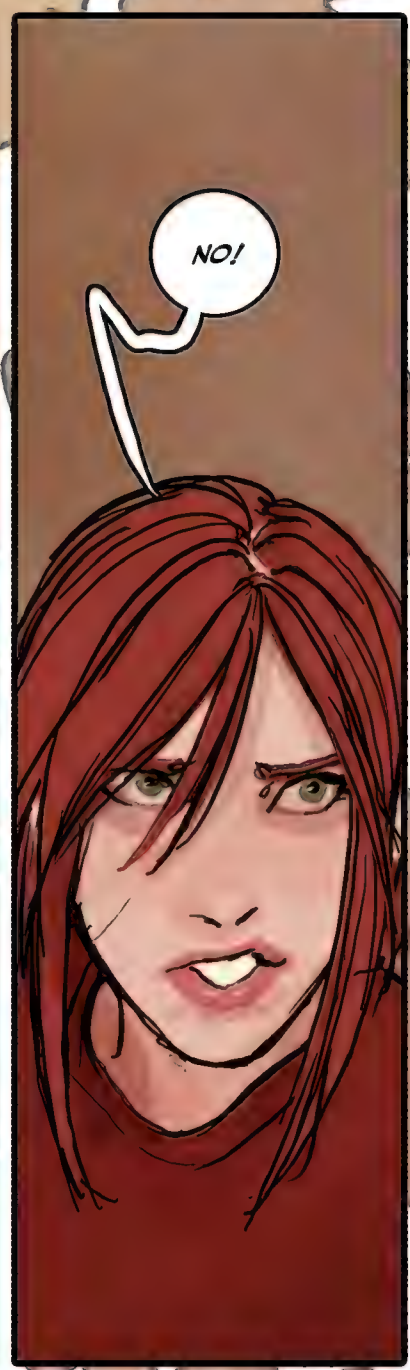

OF *WHAT?* DID YOU TELL HER? OR, LIKE THESE STORIES, WAS IT ANOTHER FORM OF MANIPULATION?
LISUX

OMAGAWD! LOOK, ALLY, I DID A THING! NOW PRESUME THAT I HAVE FEELINGS FOR YOU AND TELL ME YOU LOVE ME!
LISUX

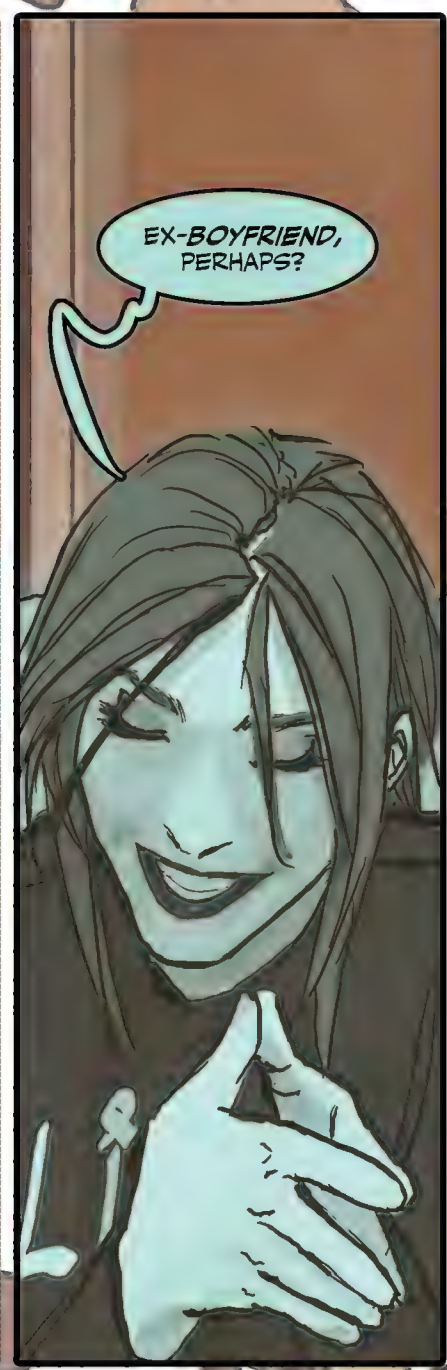
NO! THAT'S NOT ME! I'M *NOT* LIKE THAT!

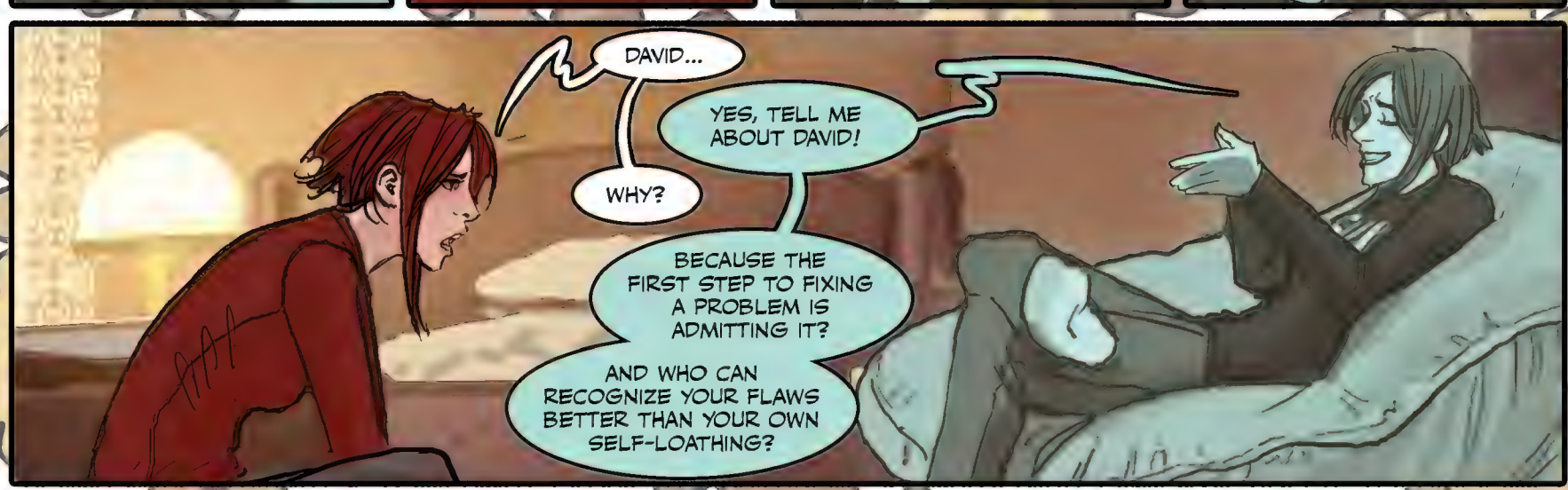

JUST SITTING ON YOUR ASS, LIKE A RELATIONSHIP COUCH POTATO, WAITING FOR *SOMEONE ELSE* TO MAKE A MOVE!
LISUX
FOOMP

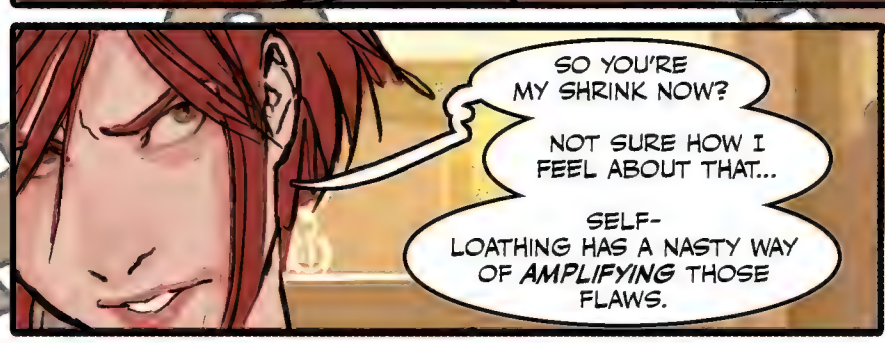
THAT'S NOT YOU? I'M TOTALLY *NOT* DESCRIBING YOU, AM I?


NO!

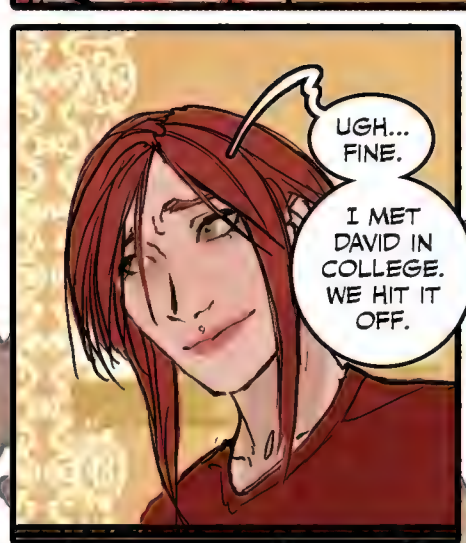
HEHEHEHHEHEH, *REALLY?* IS THAT YOUR *FINAL* ANSWER? YOU WANNA CALL A *FRIEND,* MAYBE?


EX-*BOYFRIEND,* PERHAPS?


DAVID...
YES, TELL ME ABOUT DAVID!
WHY?
BECAUSE THE FIRST STEP TO FIXING A PROBLEM IS ADMITTING IT?
AND WHO CAN RECOGNIZE YOUR FLAWS BETTER THAN YOUR OWN SELF-LOATHING?


SO YOU'RE MY SHRINK NOW?
NOT SURE HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT...
SELF-LOATHING HAS A NASTY WAY OF *AMPLIFYING* THOSE FLAWS.

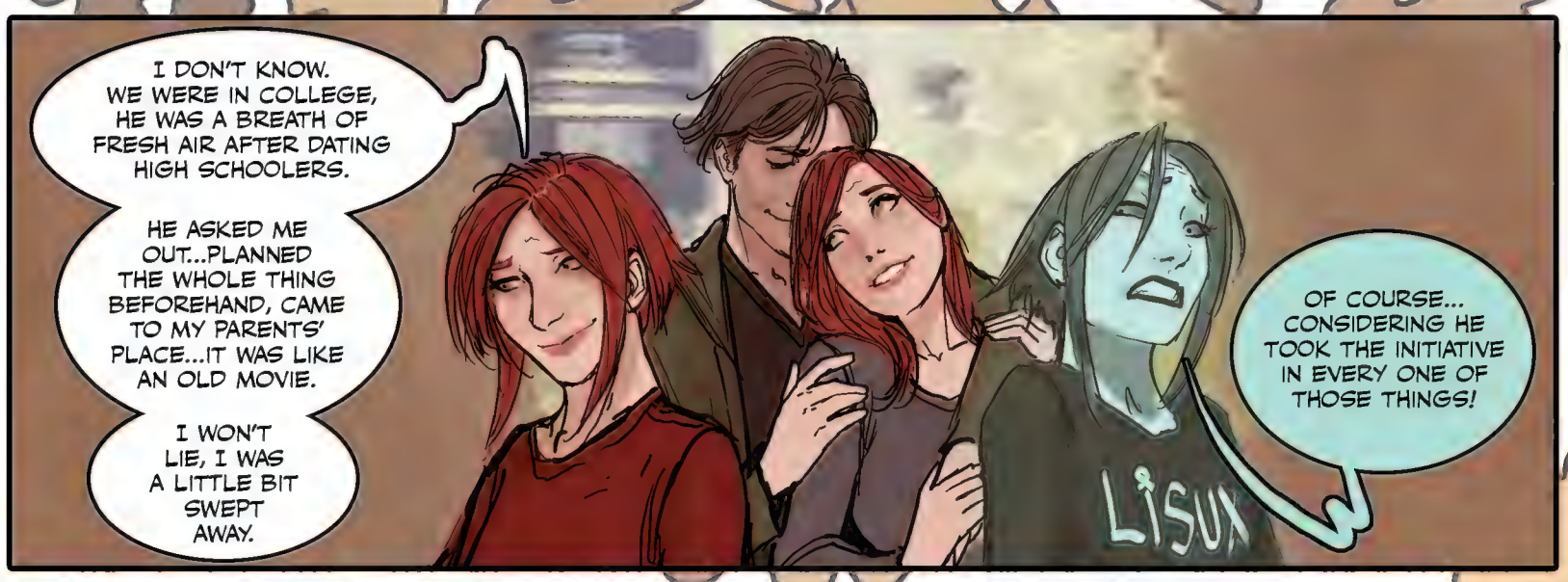
THE BETTER TO *SEE* THEM, MY DEAR! NOW SPILL IT!

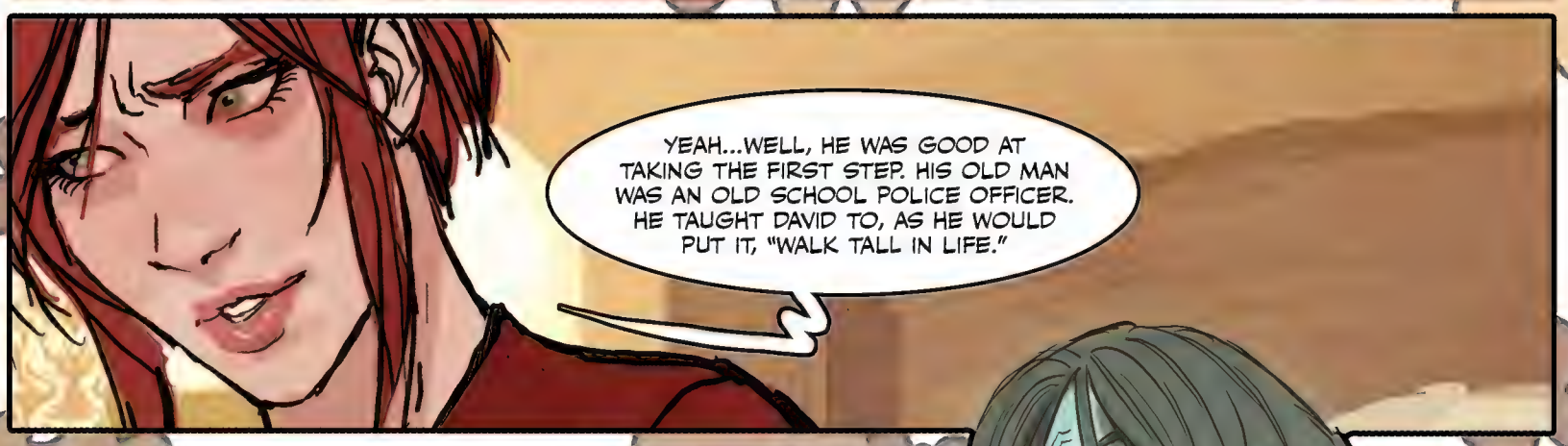

UGH... FINE.
I MET DAVID IN COLLEGE. WE HIT IT OFF.

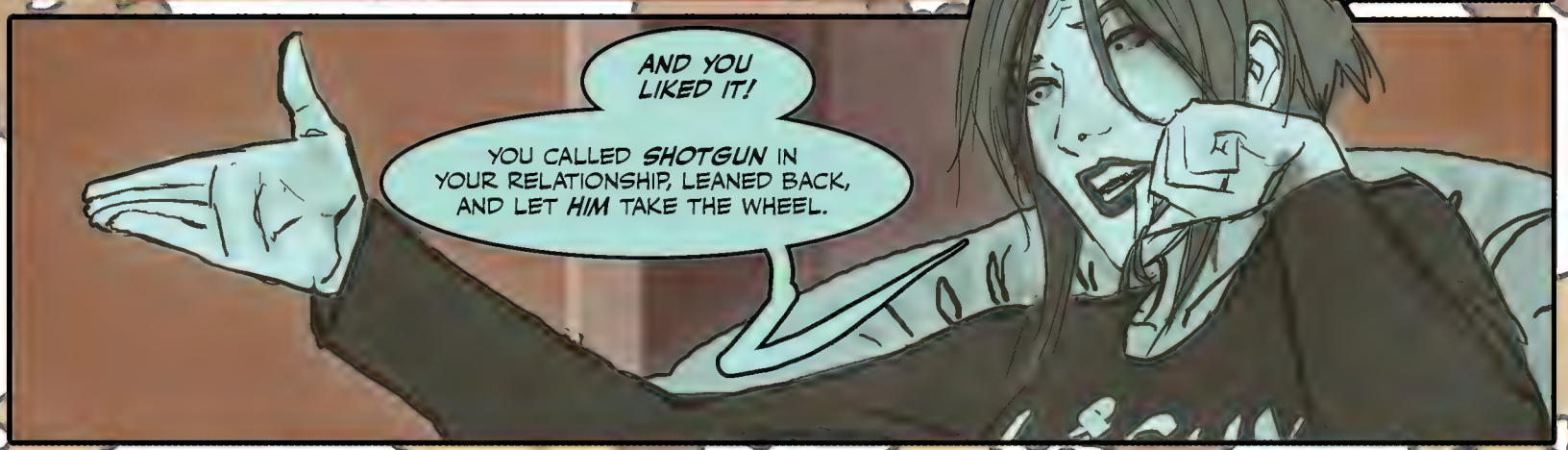
HE HAD A WAY ABOUT HIM. CHARMING...

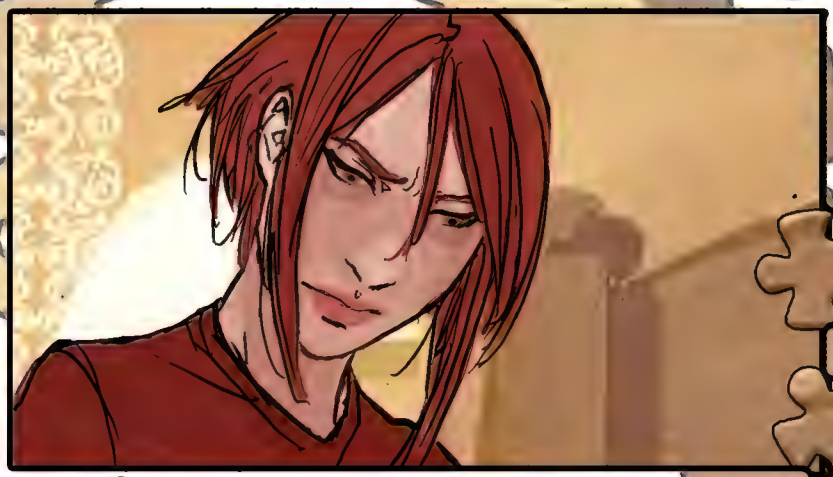
NICE SMILE, NICER...EYES.

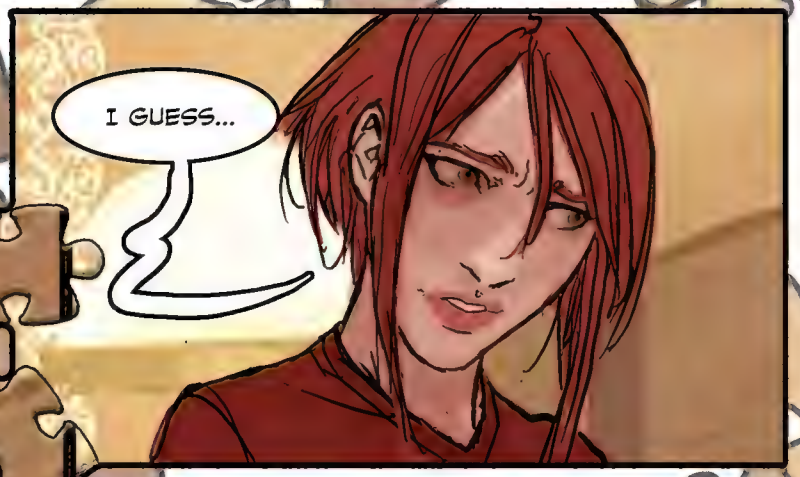
GROAN!


I DON'T KNOW. WE WERE IN COLLEGE, HE WAS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR AFTER DATING HIGH SCHOOLERS.
HE ASKED ME OUT...PLANNED THE WHOLE THING BEFOREHAND, CAME TO MY PARENTS' PLACE...IT WAS LIKE AN OLD MOVIE.
I WON'T LIE, I WAS A LITTLE BIT SWEPT AWAY.
OF COURSE... CONSIDERING HE TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN EVERY ONE OF THOSE THINGS!
LISUX

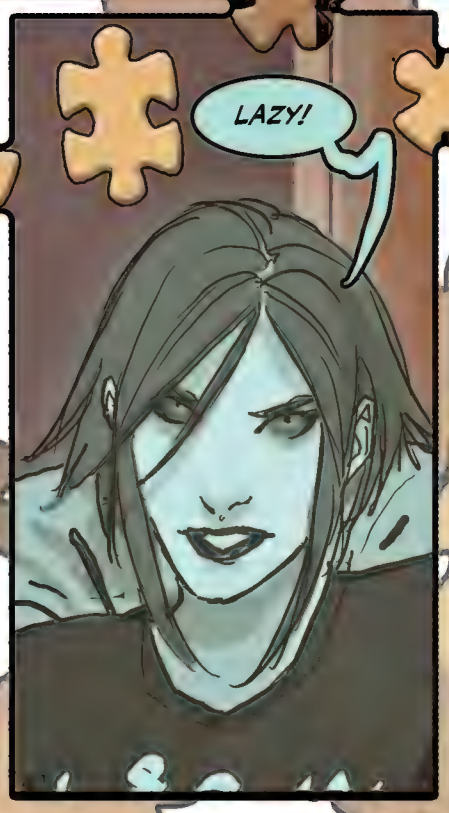

YEAH...WELL, HE WAS GOOD AT TAKING THE FIRST STEP. HIS OLD MAN WAS AN OLD SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER. HE TAUGHT DAVID TO, AS HE WOULD PUT IT, "WALK TALL IN LIFE."


AND YOU LIKED IT!
YOU CALLED SHOTGUN IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP, LEANED BACK, AND LET HIM TAKE THE WHEEL.

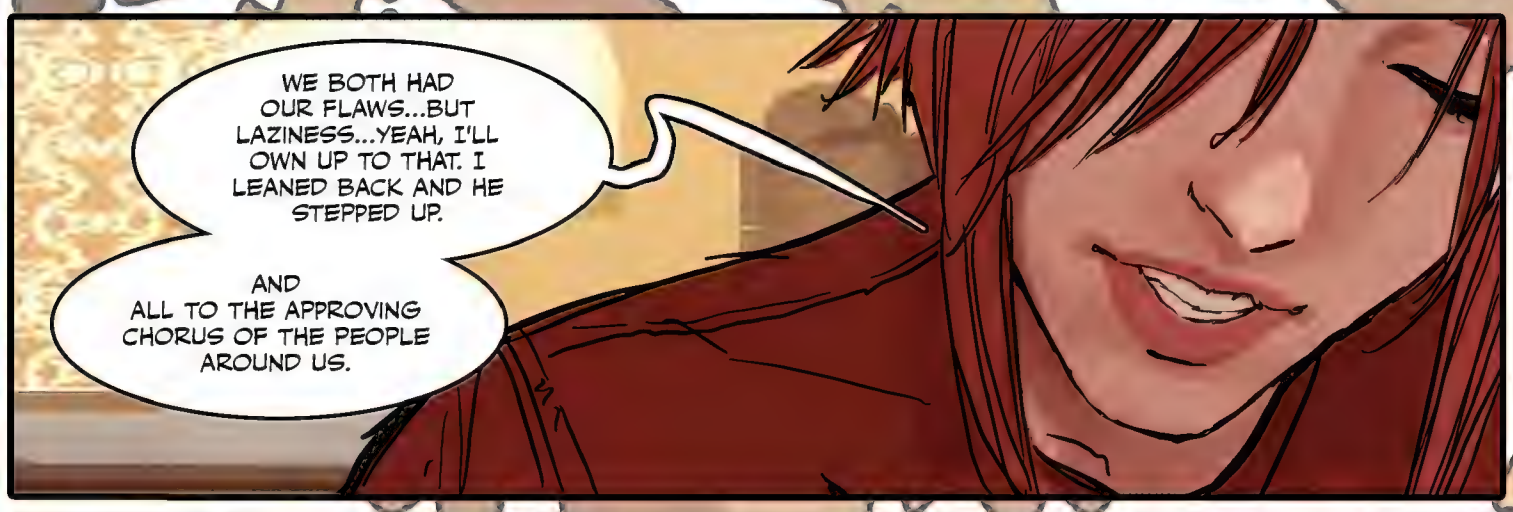



I GUESS...

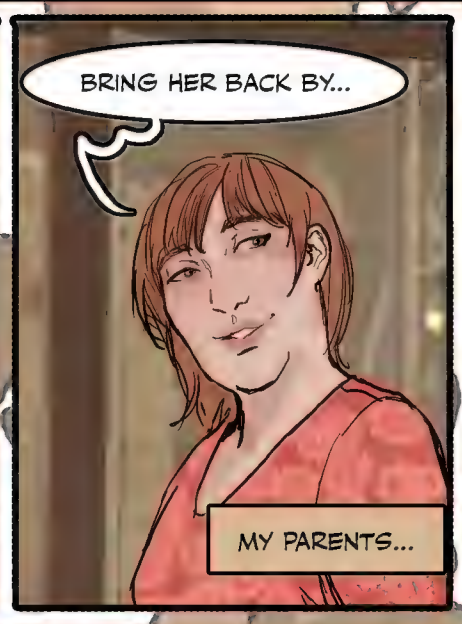
I WONDERED AT TIMES IF MY SECRET FETISH HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT... BUT...THE THING IS, I WASN'T SUBMISSIVE WITH HIM, NOT REALLY. IF ANYTHING I WAS...DEMANDING. EXPECTING.


LAZY!

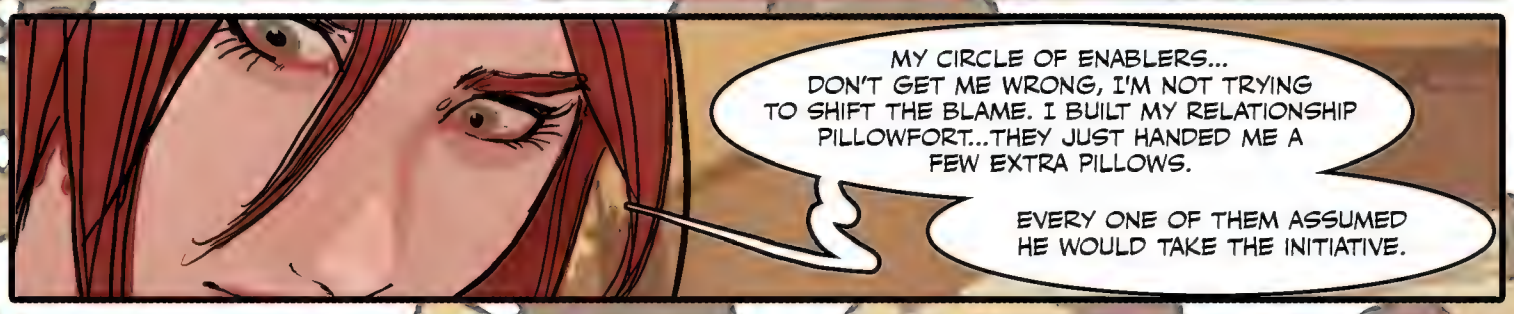
YEAH.


WE BOTH HAD OUR FLAWS...BUT LAZINESS...YEAH, I'LL OWN UP TO THAT. I LEANED BACK AND HE STEPPED UP.
AND ALL TO THE APPROVING CHORUS OF THE PEOPLE AROUND US.

TREAT HER WELL, DAVID!
MY BROTHERS...

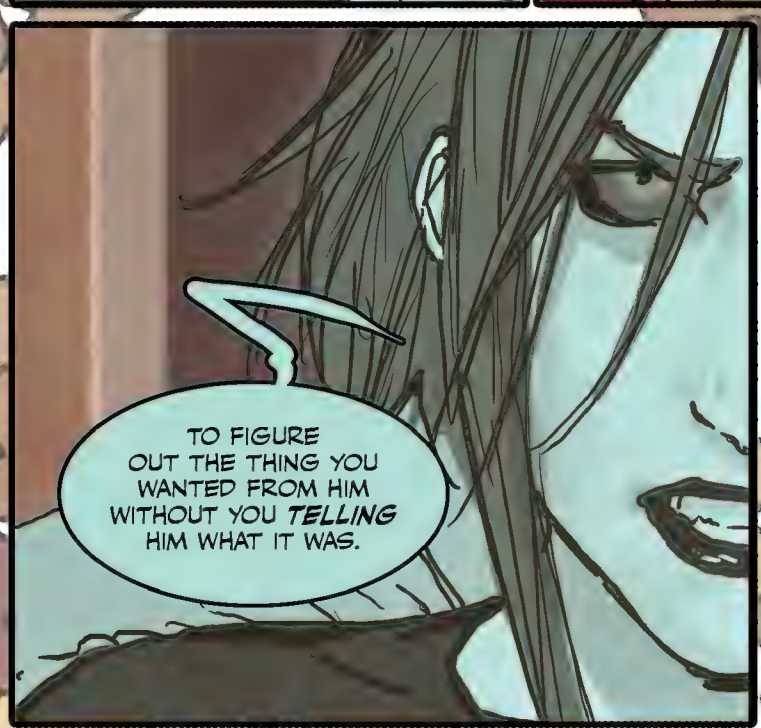

BRING HER BACK BY...
MY PARENTS...

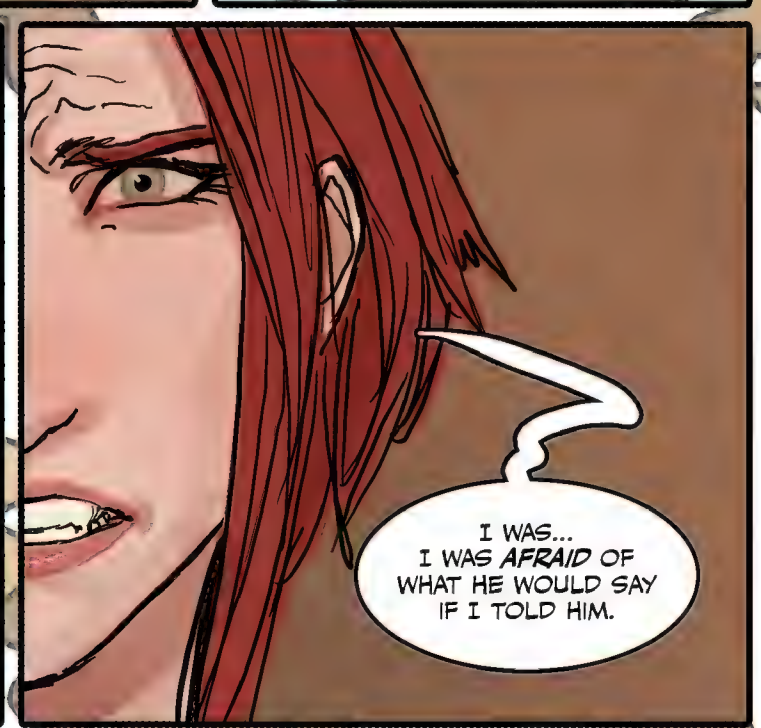
SO...DID HE POP THE QUESTION?
FRIENDS...


MY CIRCLE OF ENABLERS... DON'T GET ME WRONG, I'M NOT TRYING TO SHIFT THE BLAME. I BUILT MY RELATIONSHIP PILLOWFORT...THEY JUST HANDED ME A FEW EXTRA PILLOWS.
EVERY ONE OF THEM ASSUMED HE WOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE.

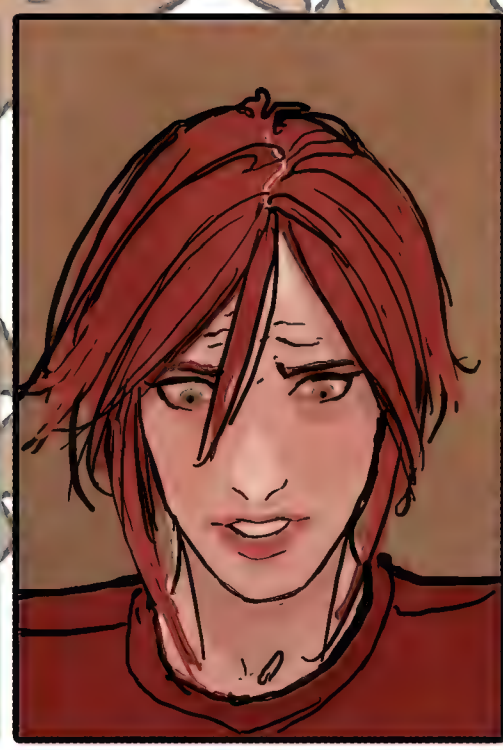
THEY ASSUMED IT, BUT YOU...YOU WERE EXPECTING IT!

EXPECTED HIM TO DO SOMETHING ELSE AS WELL.


TO FIGURE OUT THE THING YOU WANTED FROM HIM WITHOUT YOU TELLING HIM WHAT IT WAS.

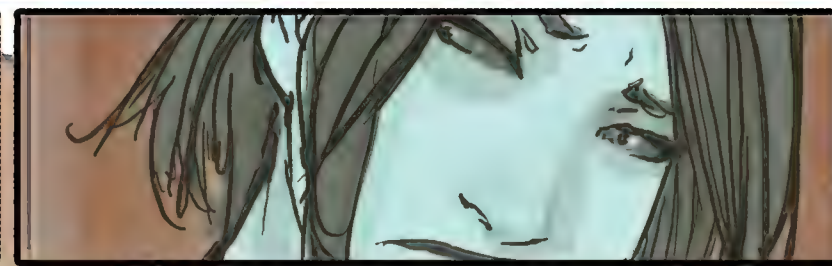

I WAS... I WAS AFRAID OF WHAT HE WOULD SAY IF I TOLD HIM.

SOUND FAMILIAR?



REMIND ME AGAIN, LISA! HOW DID IT ALL END UP?

IT...ATE US. LIKE A CANCER.



YEAH...

SO, YOU BROKE UP...
THE PILLOWFORT GONE. NO COUCH FOR THE RELATIONSHIP COUCH POTATO.
THAT'S WHEN YOU BECAME STRONG ONCE AGAIN... EVEN I COULDN'T TOUCH YOU!
LISUX

YOU SNAPPED OUT OF YOUR FUNK...MOVED OUT OF YOUR PARENTS' PLACE, STARTED WRITING...
LISUX

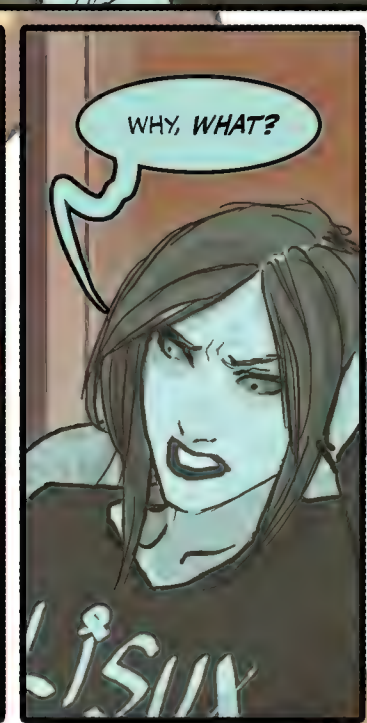
YOU REALLY HAD A GRASP ON THE REINS OF YOUR LIFE.
LISUX

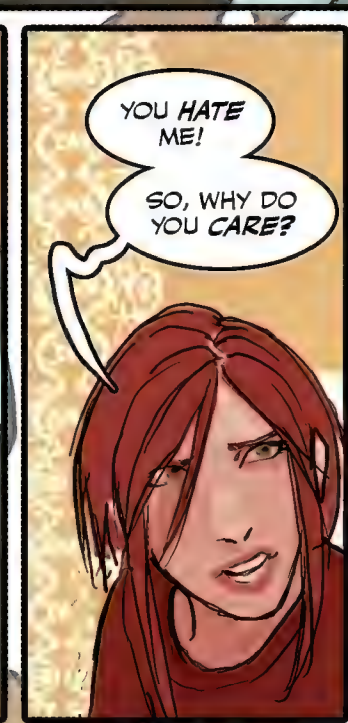
WELL DONE! HAVE A BADGE!
LISUX

YOU REALLY DO HATE ME...
HELLO? SELF-LOATHING? FUCKING DUH!

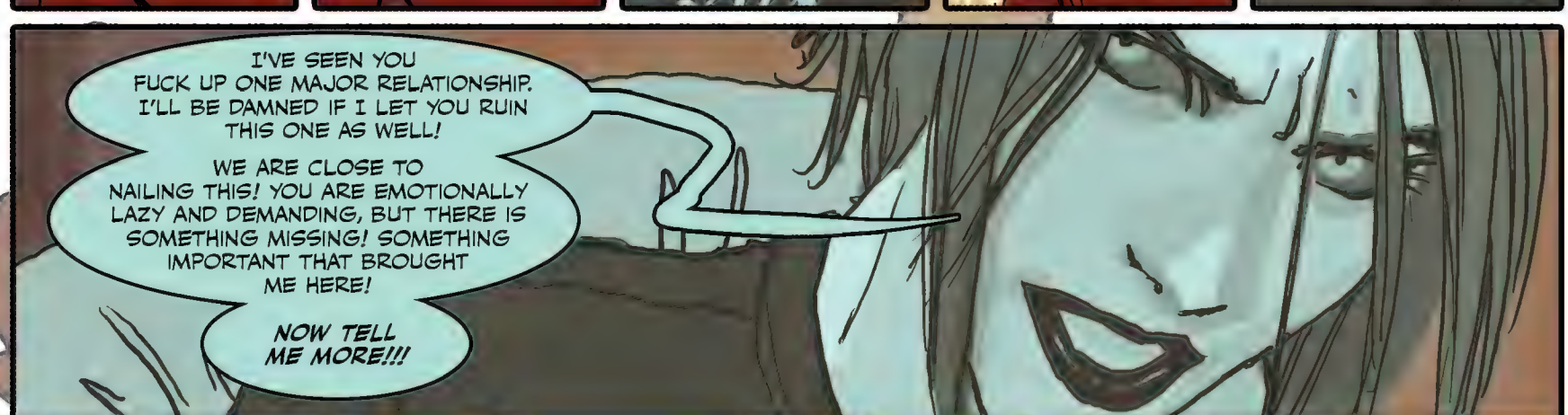
NOW KEEP TALKING. WE NEED TO FIGURE THIS OUT!
LISUX

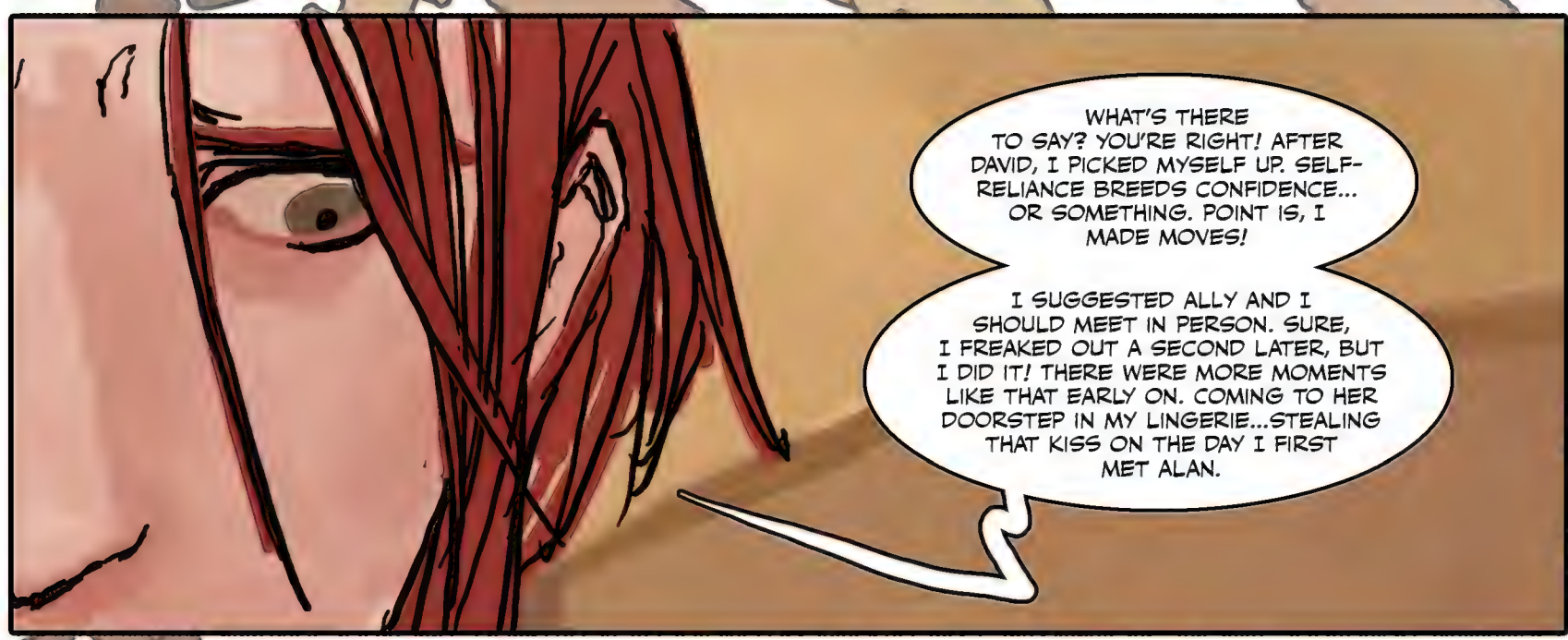
WHY?


WHY, WHAT?
LISUX


YOU HATE ME!
SO, WHY DO YOU CARE?

I'M A PART OF YOU!
I MAY HATE YOU, BUT I LOVE HER!


I'VE SEEN YOU FUCK UP ONE MAJOR RELATIONSHIP. I'LL BE DAMNED IF I LET YOU RUIN THIS ONE AS WELL!
WE ARE CLOSE TO NAILING THIS! YOU ARE EMOTIONALLY LAZY AND DEMANDING, BUT THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING! SOMETHING IMPORTANT THAT BROUGHT ME HERE!
NOW TELL ME MORE!!!


WHAT'S THERE TO SAY? YOU'RE RIGHT! AFTER DAVID, I PICKED MYSELF UP. SELF-RELIANCE BREEDS CONFIDENCE... OR SOMETHING. POINT IS, I MADE MOVES!
I SUGGESTED ALLY AND I SHOULD MEET IN PERSON. SURE, I FREAKED OUT A SECOND LATER, BUT I DID IT! THERE WERE MORE MOMENTS LIKE THAT EARLY ON. COMING TO HER DOORSTEP IN MY LINGERIE...STEALING THAT KISS ON THE DAY I FIRST MET ALAN.

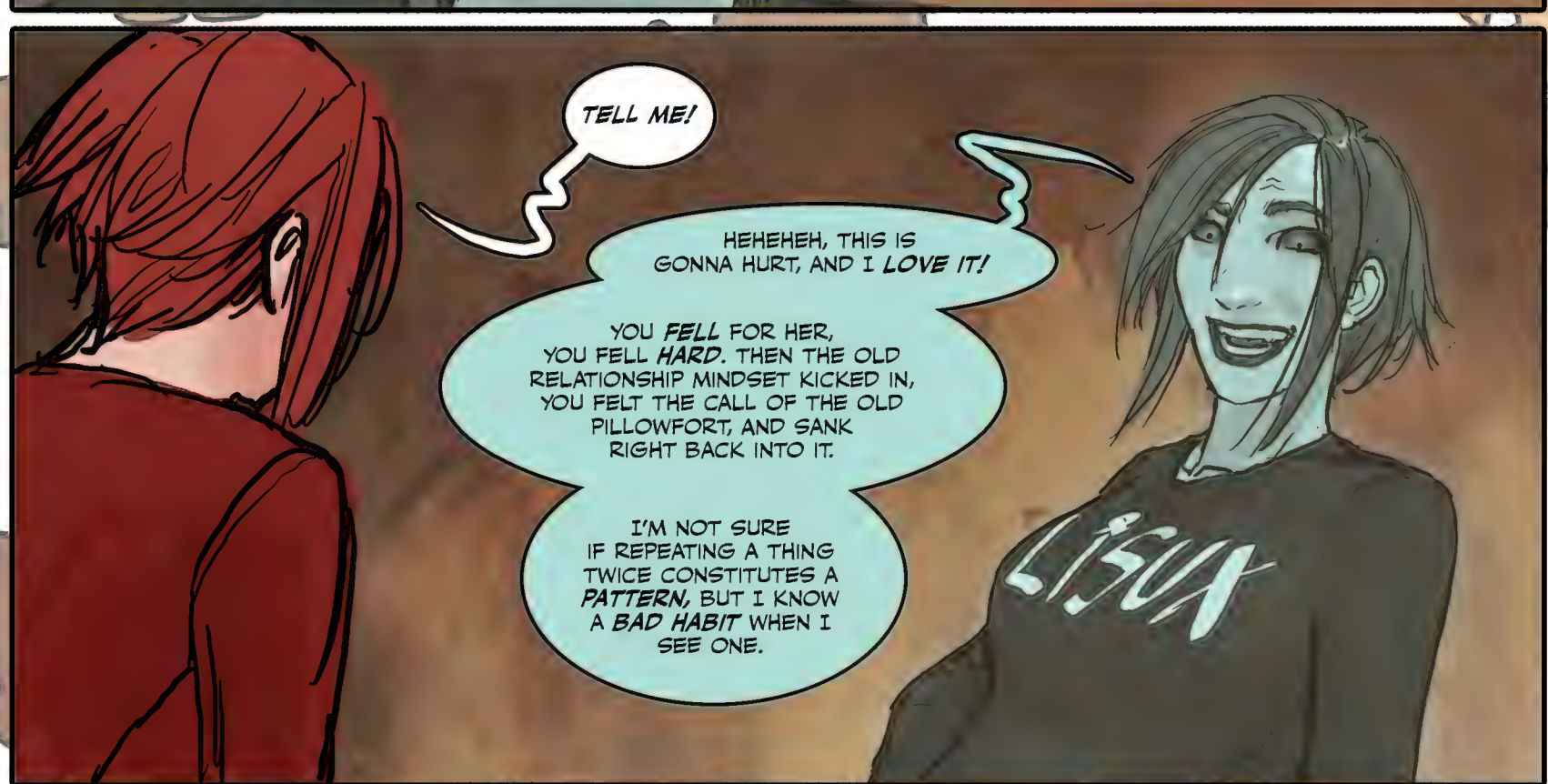
HOW 'BOUT THAT?
I WASN'T QUITE AS PASSIVE AS YOU THINK!

WHAT'S THAT, TEN MINUTES AGO?
BACK THEN SHE THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST FRIENDS?
'KAY!

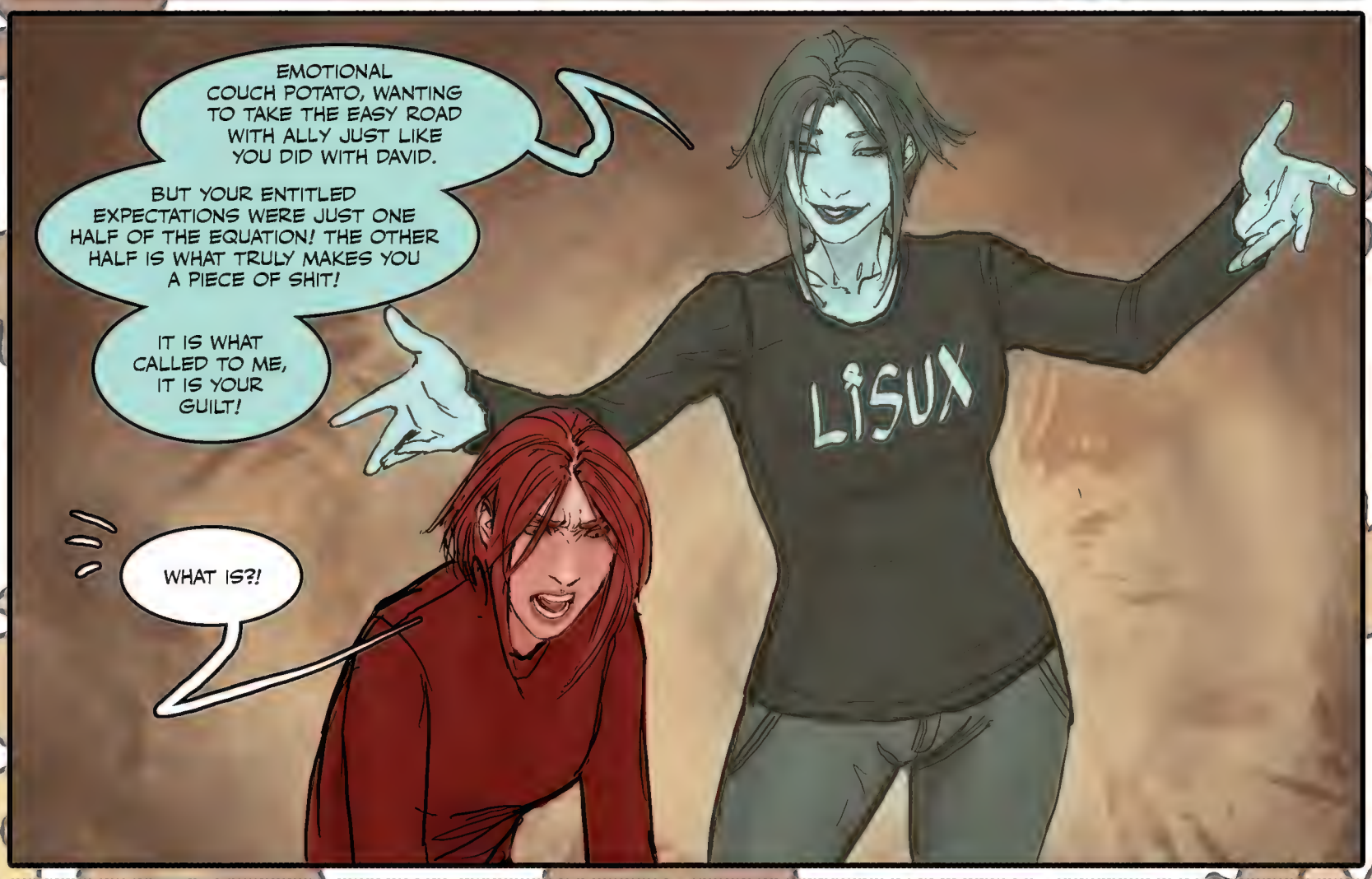
IT STILL SAYS, NO LOVE, NO GO! LISA ONLY ACTS WHEN IT'S EMOTIONALLY SAFE!

OH, WHATEVER!

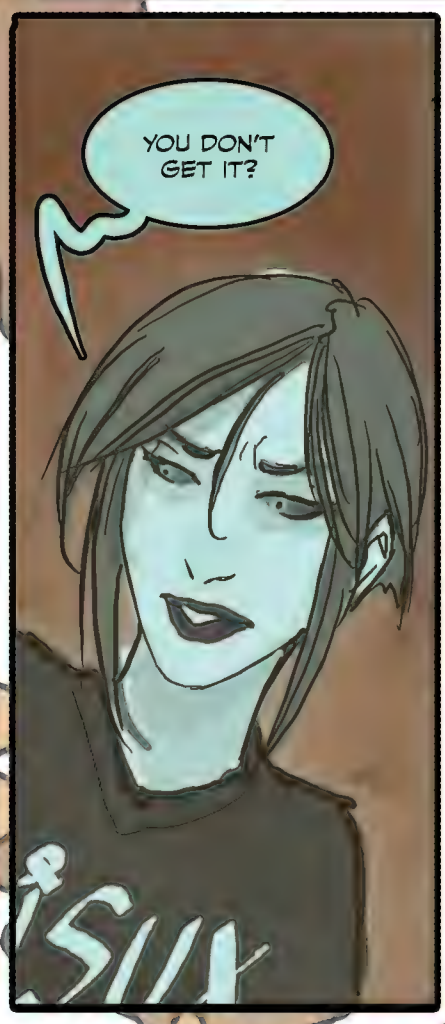
WHAT? DID YOU EXPECT ME TO ALL OF A SUDDEN AGREE WITH YOU?
TO JUST *GIVE UP?* LISA, THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY I MAY APPEAR, BUT IT IS YOUR FEELING OF *GUILT* THAT BROUGHT ME HERE TODAY!
OH, YOU *TRIED* MASKING IT! TRIED *PLACATING* ME BY ADMITTING TO OLD MISTAKES WITH DAVID.
BUT IT IS YOUR REPETITIVE INSISTENCE THAT YOU DID THINGS FOR ALLY THAT POINTED ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
AND NOW, I FIGURED IT OUT.
THE REASON WHY YOU ARE SITTING HERE HATING YOURSELF!


TELL ME!
HEHEHEH, THIS IS GONNA HURT, AND I *LOVE IT!*
YOU *FELL* FOR HER, YOU FELL *HARD*. THEN THE OLD RELATIONSHIP MINDSET KICKED IN, YOU FELT THE CALL OF THE OLD PILLOWFORT, AND SANK RIGHT BACK INTO IT.
I'M NOT SURE IF REPEATING A THING TWICE CONSTITUTES A *PATTERN,* BUT I KNOW A *BAD HABIT* WHEN I SEE ONE.
LISA

YOU EXPECTED ALLY TO TAKE CHARGE, TO LEAD. SHE WAS YOUR DOMME. IT WAS IN THE JOB DESCRIPTION! AND SHE PERFORMED ADMIRABLY. COMPROMISING FOR YOU, CATERING TO YOU...


EMOTIONAL COUCH POTATO, WANTING TO TAKE THE EASY ROAD WITH ALLY JUST LIKE YOU DID WITH DAVID.
BUT YOUR ENTITLED EXPECTATIONS WERE JUST ONE HALF OF THE EQUATION! THE OTHER HALF IS WHAT TRULY MAKES YOU A PIECE OF SHIT!
IT IS WHAT CALLED TO ME, IT IS YOUR GUILT!
WHAT IS?!
LISUX

YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF WHO SHE SHOULD BE MADE YOU CHOOSE TO IGNORE WHO SHE REALLY IS!


YOU DON'T GET IT?

HERE! LET ME REMIND YOU!

YOUR FIRST NIGHT TOGETHER...YOU NOTICED IT! THE NERVOUS SHAKE OF HER HANDS...EVEN YOUR SECOND TIME AROUND, HER AWKWARD STANCE. THE BODY LANGUAGE NOT OF A *DOMME*, BUT OF A *PERSON!*
LISUX
A PERSON FULL OF HER OWN FEARS AND INSECURITIES WALKING AN UNCHARTED PATH...A PERSON WHO EVERY NOW AND THEN TEETERED ON THE EDGE OF FALLING APART.
BUT SHE COULDN'T FALL APART. NOT WHEN PRECIOUS LISA NEEDS SUPPORT! EVEN AFTER PRECIOUS LISA FUCKS SHIT UP!
SHE WAS JUST AS NEW TO ALL OF THIS AS YOU WERE, AND YOU EXPECTED HER TO CARRY YOUR SORRY ASS!

I FINALLY SAW IT ALL, AND I FELT SICK TO MY STOMACH.
DAVID AND I...WE WERE THE FAMILIAR COUPLE WALKING A WELL-TROD ROAD, MAPS, ROADSIGNS, AND ADVICE FROM PEOPLE AROUND US IN ABUNDANCE.
WITH ALLY I HAD NO FRAME OF REFERENCE. WE WERE MAKING OUR *OWN* WAY...
I WAS NEW TO ALL OF THIS. SEXUALLY, EMOTIONALLY... SHE WAS MANY OF MY FIRSTS. MY FIST DOMME, THE FIRST WOMAN I KNEW INTIMATELY, FIRST WOMAN I FELL IN LOVE WITH. AND BEING NEW, I EXPECTED HER TO GUIDE ME...
BUT, AS I WAITED FOR HER TO STEP UP, I CONVENIENTLY I TURNED A BLIND EYE TO THE OBVIOUS! I WAS MANY OF *HER* FIRSTS AS WELL.
BEST-CASE SCENARIO, EVEN IF MY HOPES WEREN'T IN VAIN, EVEN IF SHE DID FEEL FOR ME WHAT I FELT FOR HER...MY ALLYCAT...SHE COULD HAVE BEEN JUST AS CONFUSED, JUST AS INSECURE, JUST AS LOST...

I KNEW THIS BUT I CHOSE TO IGNORE IT, BECAUSE IT MADE THINGS EASIER EASIER FOR ME.

I FAILED HER.

I WAS A LAZY... USELESS, EMOTIONAL COUCH POTATO.

NO, DEAR READER, THERE WAS NO DARK SELF-LOATHING VERSION OF ME IN THE ROOM. NOT IN ANY SUCH ANTHROPOMORPHIC INCARNATION.

THE ONLY STRAITJACKET I NEED IS OF THE FANCY, SEXY VARIETY.

I AM A WRITER, AFTER ALL. I EMBELLISH THINGS.

IF I DIDN'T, WE'D HAVE A CHAPTER OF ME SITTING ON THE FLOOR THINKING ABOUT STUFF...

RIVETING!

BUT I'LL TELL YOU THIS: I NEEDED MY SELF-LOATHING THAT DAY. LIKE I SAID, IT HAD A WAY OF AMPLIFYING ONE'S FLAWS. FIGURING OUT THE CRACKS IN THE MASKS, AND PINPOINTING GUILT. OFTEN TO EXAGGERATED PROPORTIONS, SURE... BUT I NEEDED EXACTLY THAT. A LENS! ANY OTHER TIME, IT IS AN EMOTION I'D RATHER NOT DEAL WITH. THEN AND THERE, HOWEVER, MY SELF-LOATHING WAS A MICROSCOPE STARING AT A MALIGNANT CLUMP OF UNSEEN CELLS THREATENING TO KILL SOMETHING WONDERFUL.

AND IT DID SOMETHING ELSE FOR ME AS WELL...

IT MADE ME CHOOSE.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO END THE STORY NOW?

YES...

GOOD...

YOUR WRITING STILL SUCKS!

I KNEW HOW TO FINISH IT...

IT TOOK COURAGE, BUT I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO.

SO MANY CHANGES, SO MANY REWRITES. IT WAS A COWARDLY TALE, I INITIALLY WROTE.

IN EVERY VERSION OF THAT STORY, ALLISON SAID IT FIRST, PROMPTING LISBETH, PROMPTING ME TO RESPOND. IT WAS SELF-INDULGENT WISH FULFILLMENT AND I ALMOST DUMPED THAT ON ALLY.

I HOPED, IF I WROTE FICTIONAL ALLY SAYING IT, THE REAL ONE MIGHT...WHAT? GET A CLUE? FOLLOW HER EXAMPLE?

STEP UP TO ONCE AGAIN FULFILL MY SELFISH FANTASY OF HER?

STUPID!

I SWEAR, THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THAT DUMB IDEA MADE COMPLETE SENSE TO ME, AS ONLY DUMB IDEAS CAN. BUT NOT ANYMORE.

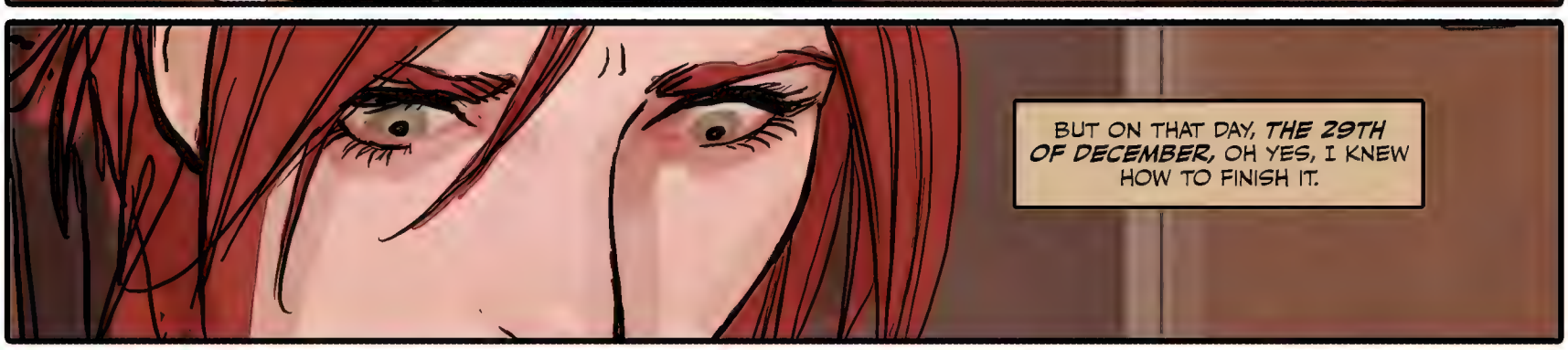
I...I ACTUALLY SAID THAT?

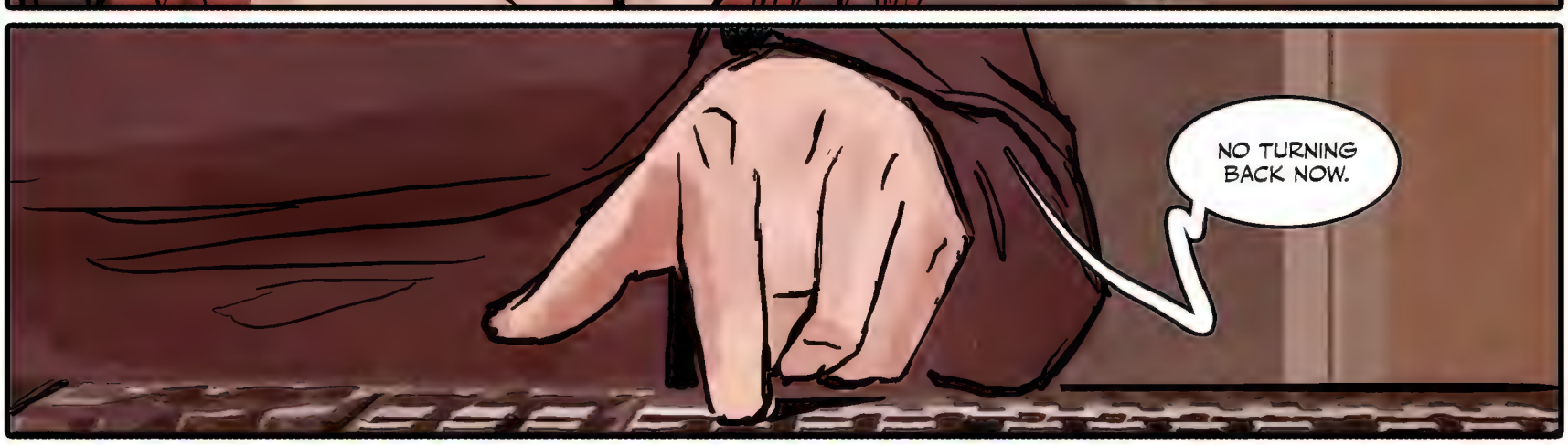
SO ALLY... HOW LONG IS IT THAT YOU HAVE BEEN HAVING THESE FEELINGS FOR ME

ALLY

THIS WAS MY BEST CHRISTMAS EVER...

I KINDA ...AN... ...OUSE... ...OUT. ...GUYS.





F5
MY ALLY
FINALLY!
IT WAS 2 A.M.
I KNEW SHE WAS UP. SHE SAID SHE WOULD BE.
SHE WAS THERE, READING THE STORY FOR WHAT WAS THE NEW LONGEST HALF AN HOUR OF MY LIFE.
THE LAST STORY... I RENAMED IT FROM THE INITIAL "MY LOVE" TO "MY ALLY."
A DISTINCTION WITHOUT DIFFERENCE.
HEART, BRACE FOR IMPACT!

MY ALLY

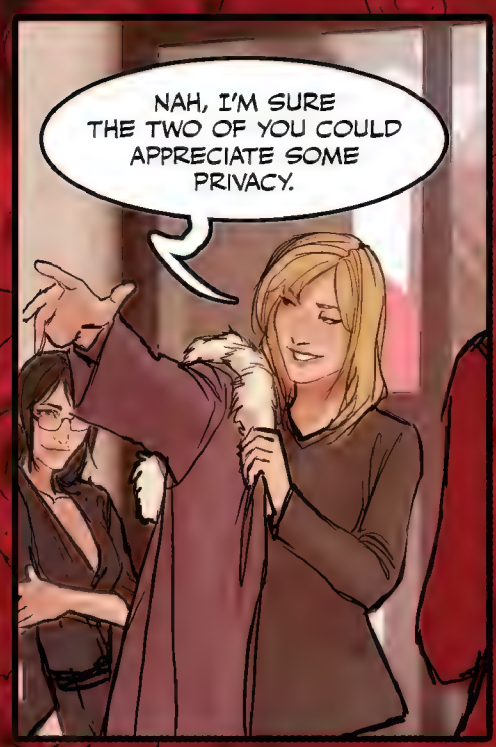
HEY, IT'S PORN, OKAY? I TEND TO INDULGE IN SOME LOWBROW CHEESINESS, THIS SEEMED OBVIOUS SO I WENT FOR IT!

AND I WENT FOR MORE THAN JUST THAT. THIS ENDED UP BEING ONE OF MY MOST POPULAR STORIES... WHY? WELL...

I GUESS, IT WAS JUST *BRIMMING* WITH HOLIDAY SPIRIT.

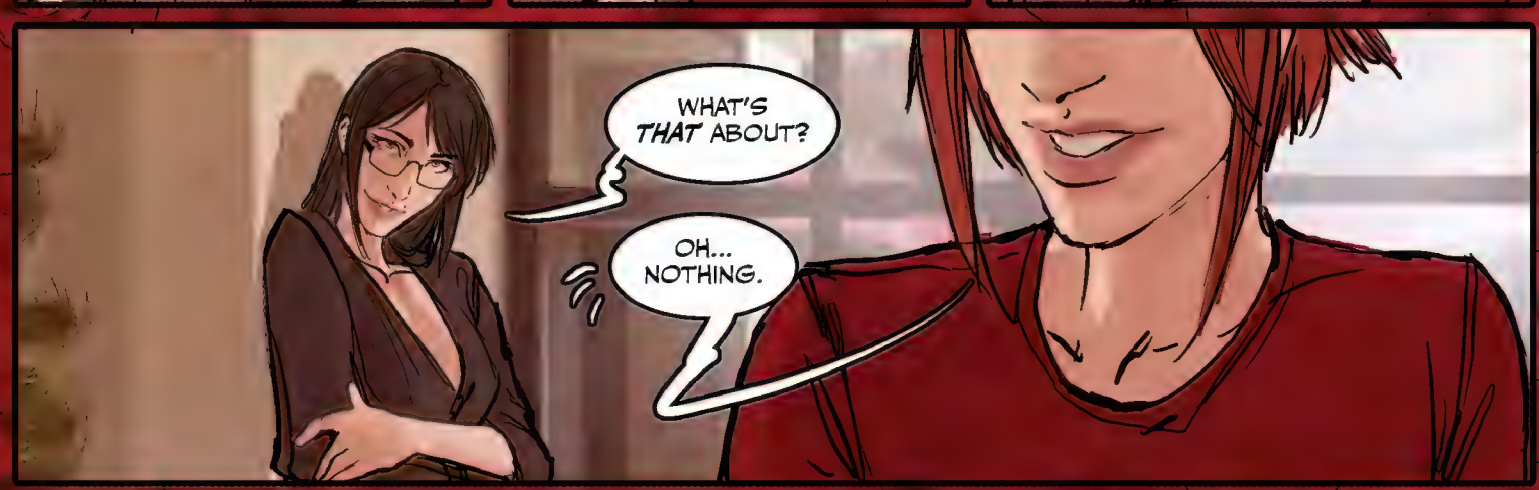
WHAT WITH THE *GIFT* GIVING...
AWW... FOR *ME?* YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE!
ENJOYMENT OF *CHOCOLATE-COVERED* HOLIDAY TREATS...
KISSES UNDER THE *MISTLETOE...*
OH, THAT'S SUBTLE!
AND ALL AROUND GOOD CHEER!

BUT THAT'S NOT THE IMPORTANT PART OF THE STORY... WE'RE GETTING TO THAT.
GOOD NIGHT, YOU TWO.
THIS WAS...
...A HELL OF A WAY TO WRAP UP THE YEAR!
I'LL DRINK TO THAT! AGAIN!
NONE FOR ME, I STILL HAVE THE STUDIO PARTY TO ATTEND!
I'LL BE THE PERSON WITH THE DUMBEST GRIN THERE!
SO THANK YOU FOR THAT! BOTH OF YOU!
YOU SURE YOU CAN'T STAY? I MEAN, THERE IS PLENTY OF FOOD!
AND BOOZE!
LOTS OF THAT!


NAH, I'M SURE THE TWO OF YOU COULD APPRECIATE SOME PRIVACY.

RIGHT, LISA?

GOOD LUCK!


WHAT'S *THAT* ABOUT?
OH... NOTHING.

UM... ALLY?
TALL...
UH...
YEAH?

FUCKING ALPHAS...
HOW DO I EVEN...

YOU OKAY?
MHM.
MAAAYBEE?

UH... *ALLY?*

UM...I HAVE A BIT OF A...
UH... CHRISTMAS REQUEST.

WELL, I GUESS I PUNISHED ALL THE *NAUGHTY* OUT OF YOU.

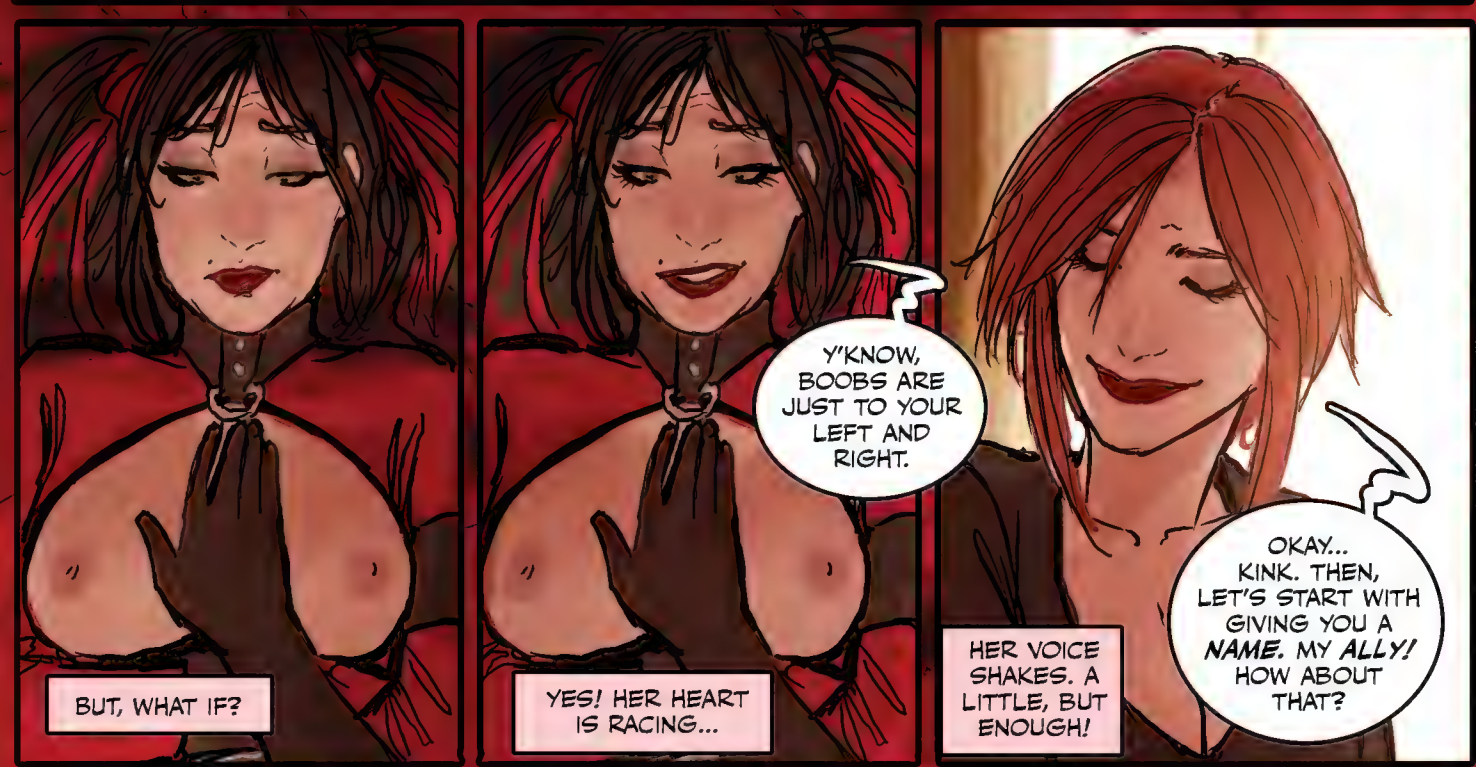
MIGHT AS WELL REWARD THE *NICE!*

THING IS, I WAS WONDERING IF WE COULD...
WELL...I GUESS...YEAH, SURE!
COMFY?

WELL... FOR IT NOT BEING MY COMFORT ZONE, IT IS ODDLY COMFORTABLE!
THIS WILL DO!
OH YES! THIS WILL DEFINITELY DO!

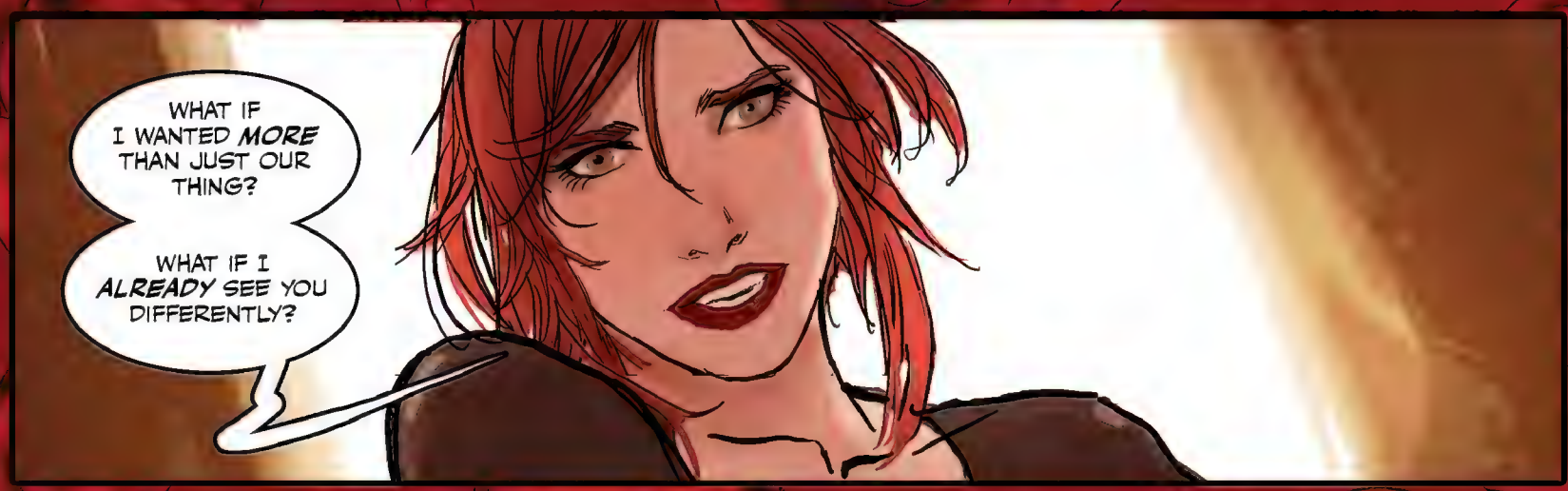
SO... NOW WHAT?
NOW, WE *TALK!*

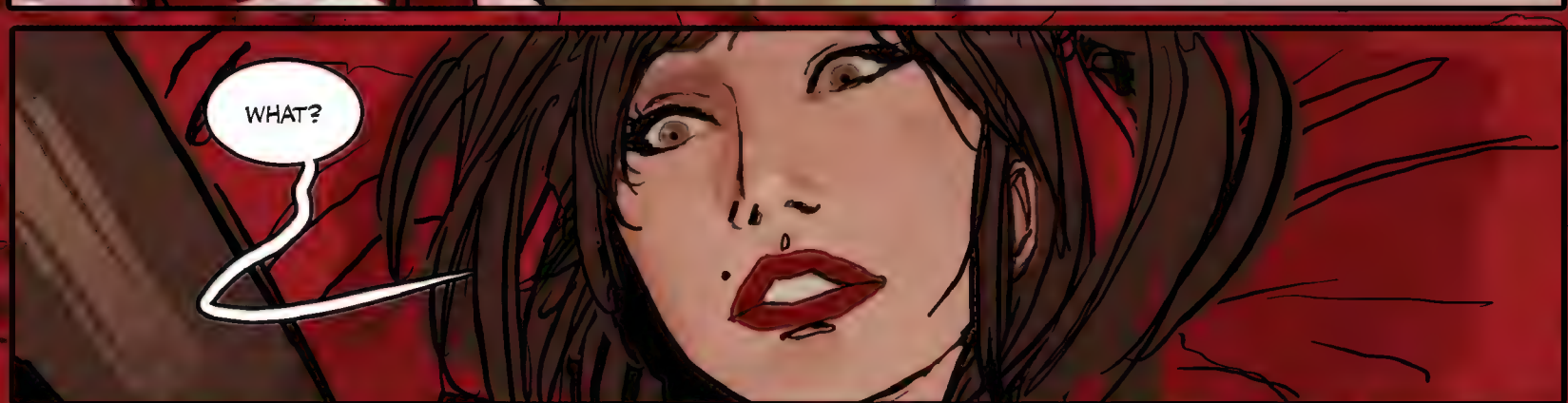
HUH.
UM...LISA, WE DRESS UP FOR THE *KINK*, NOT *TALK!*
NO...NOT YET. SHE IS STILL TOO...HER! STILL TOP EVEN FROM BELOW ME!

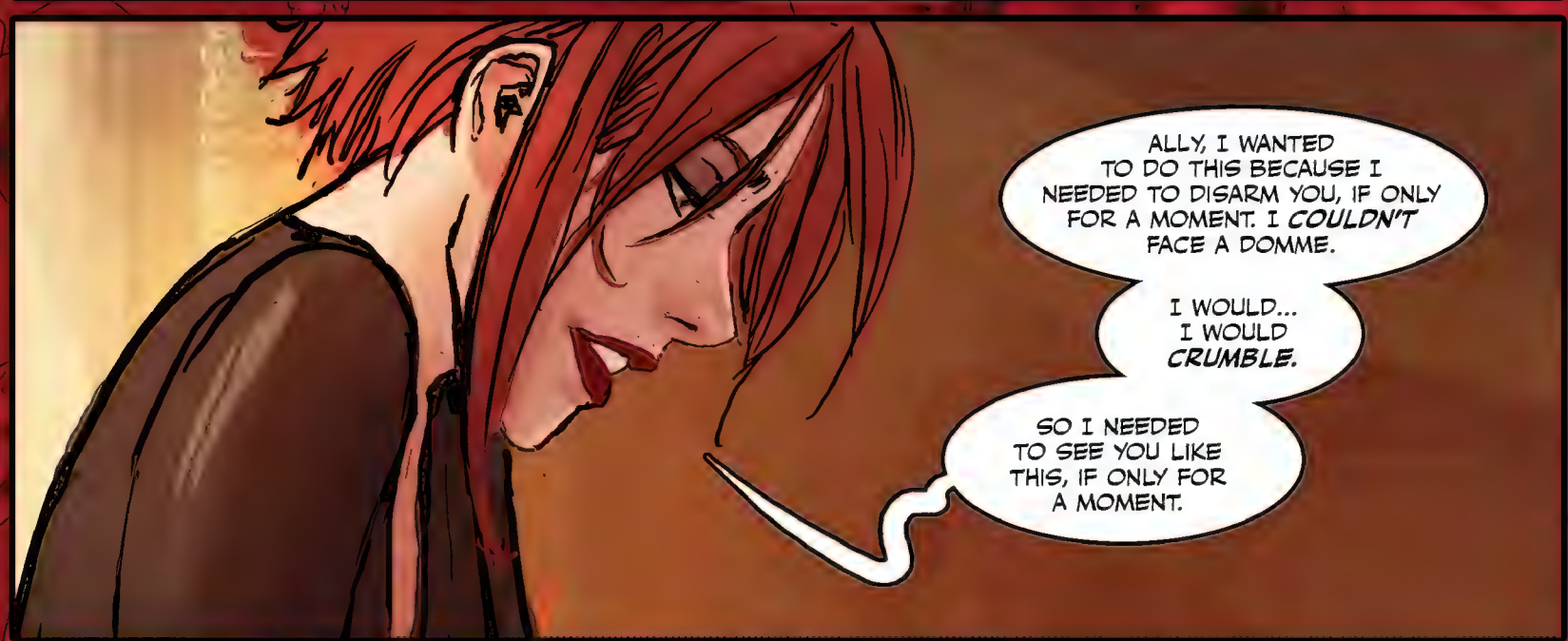

BUT, WHAT IF?
YES! HER HEART IS RACING...
Y'KNOW, BOOBS ARE JUST TO YOUR LEFT AND RIGHT.
HER VOICE SHAKES. A LITTLE, BUT ENOUGH!
OKAY... KINK. THEN, LET'S START WITH GIVING YOU A *NAME.* MY *ALLY!* HOW ABOUT THAT?

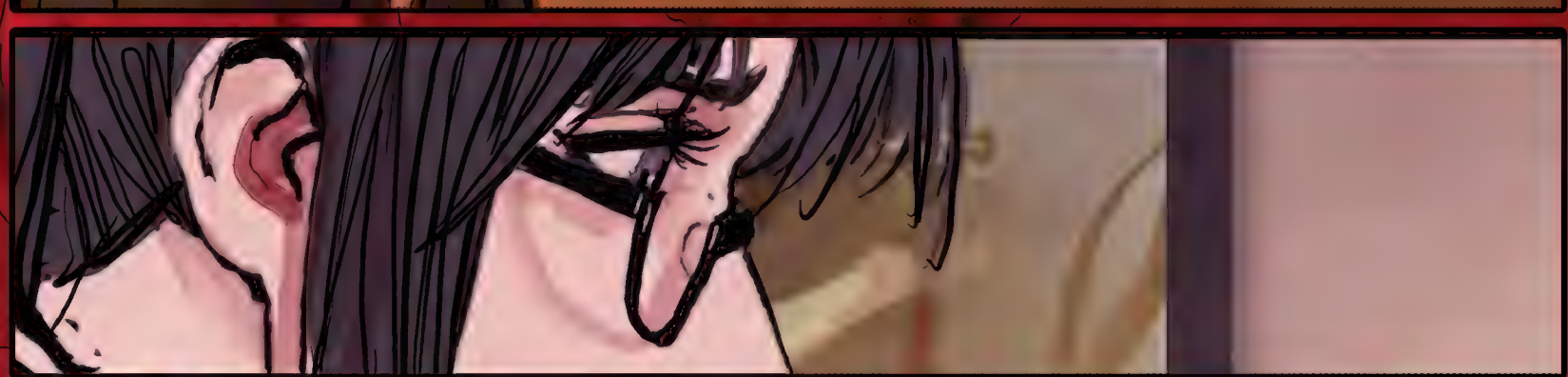
THE QUIPS ARE A *MASK*...BUT I SEE BEHIND IT. A BIT, BUT ENOUGH TO REMOVE THE BAND HOLDING IT IN PLACE.
UH, THAT'S KINDA... UNIMAGINATIVE.
REALLY? THIS COMING FROM THE BRILLIANT MIND THAT NAMED ME "LISBETH."
ALLY IT IS!

AND NOW, WE REMOVE THE MASK.
LOOK AT YOU, ALLY. NOT SO SCARY NOW, MY LITTLE SUBMISSIVE KITTY.
AS I GRAB HER COLLAR, I SEE IT IN HER EYES. GRASPING FOR HER COMFORT ZONE.
I DON'T LET GO. I OBSERVE HER. I DRINK THE MOMENT IN.
BECAUSE... I'LL NEED IT!
THERE!
LISA, PLEASE... DON'T! I DON'T WANT YOU TO...TO...
TO WHAT?
UH...
TELL ME!
I...I DON'T... WANT YOU TO... SEE ME LIKE THIS.
YOU THINK IT WILL MAKE ME THINK OF YOU DIFFERENTLY?
IT'S JUST WE HAVE A THING GOING. I AM A DOMME, YOU...YOU ARE MY SUB. WE NEED EACH OTHER... I MEAN...THAT'S...
I DON'T WANT TO RISK... RUINING IT!
THAT'S OUR THING.
R-RIGHT?


WHAT IF I WANTED *MORE* THAN JUST OUR THING?
WHAT IF I *ALREADY* SEE YOU DIFFERENTLY?


WHAT?


ALLY, I WANTED TO DO THIS BECAUSE I NEEDED TO DISARM YOU, IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT. I *COULDN'T* FACE A DOMME.
I WOULD... I WOULD *CRUMBLE.*
SO I NEEDED TO SEE YOU LIKE THIS, IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT.



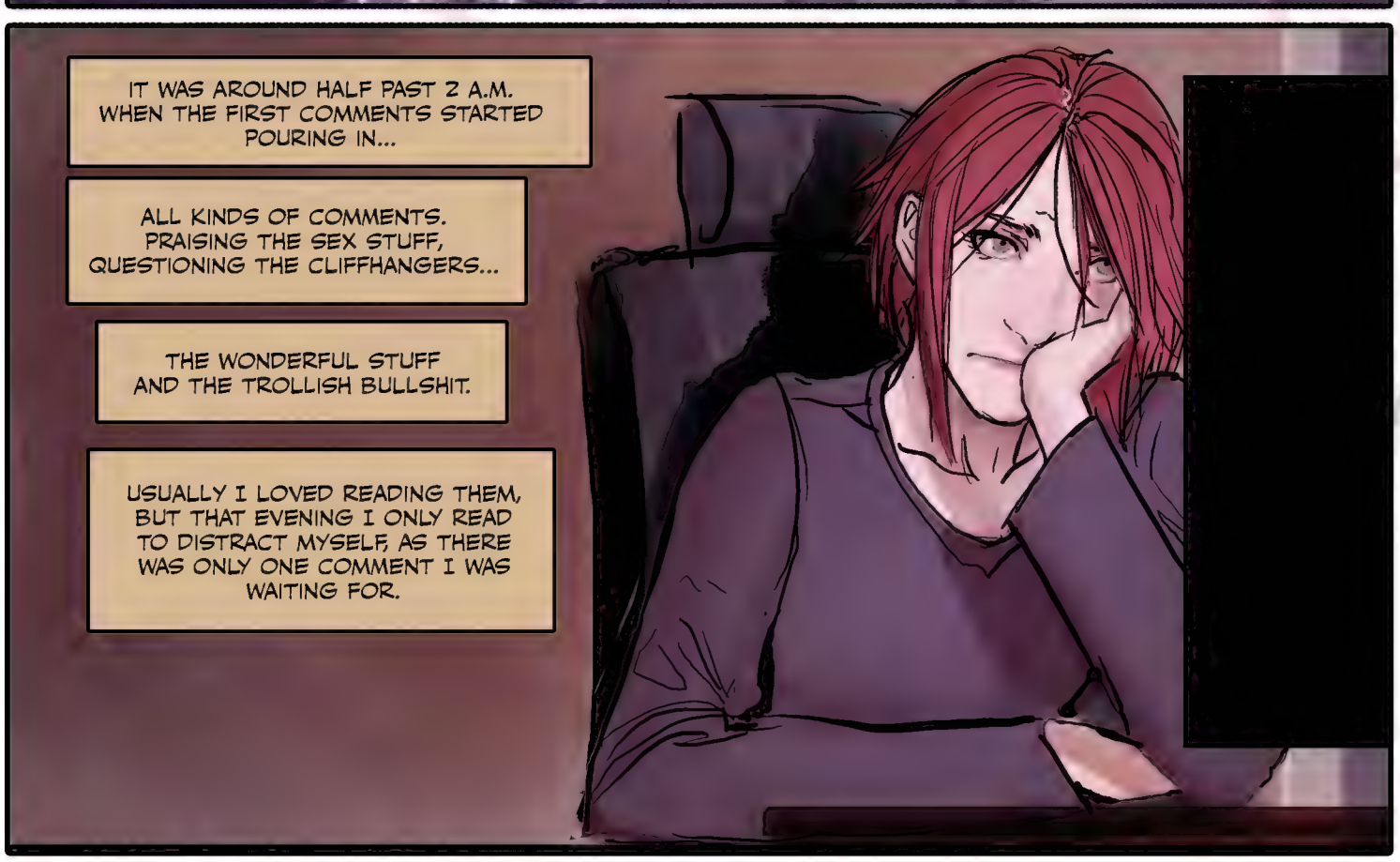
I WILL UNTIE YOU NOW. YOU SHOULD BE FREE FOR THIS PART. I THINK THIS HAS GIVEN ME ENOUGH COURAGE! I CAN FACE YOU NOW AND...

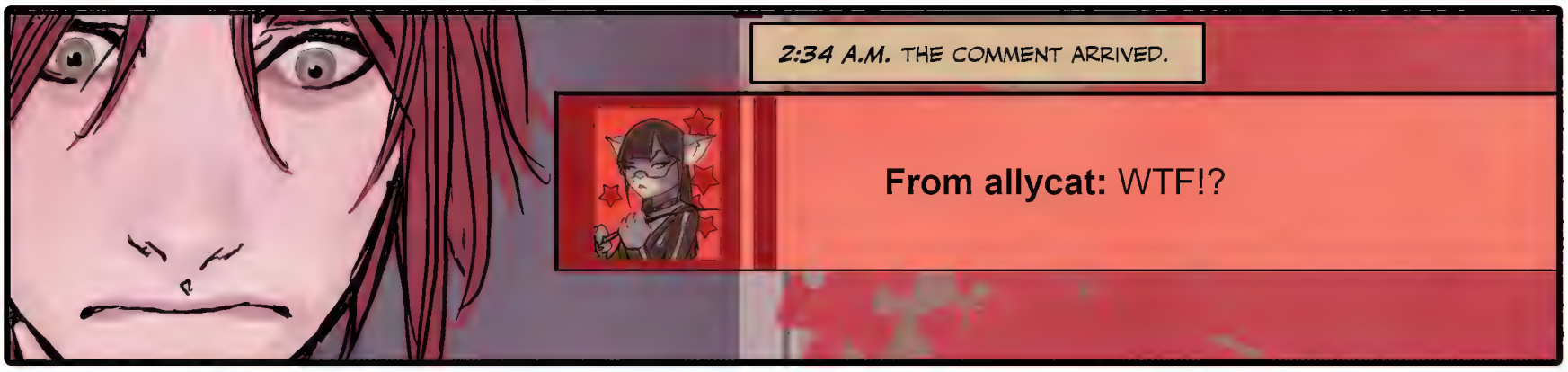
AND... WHAT?

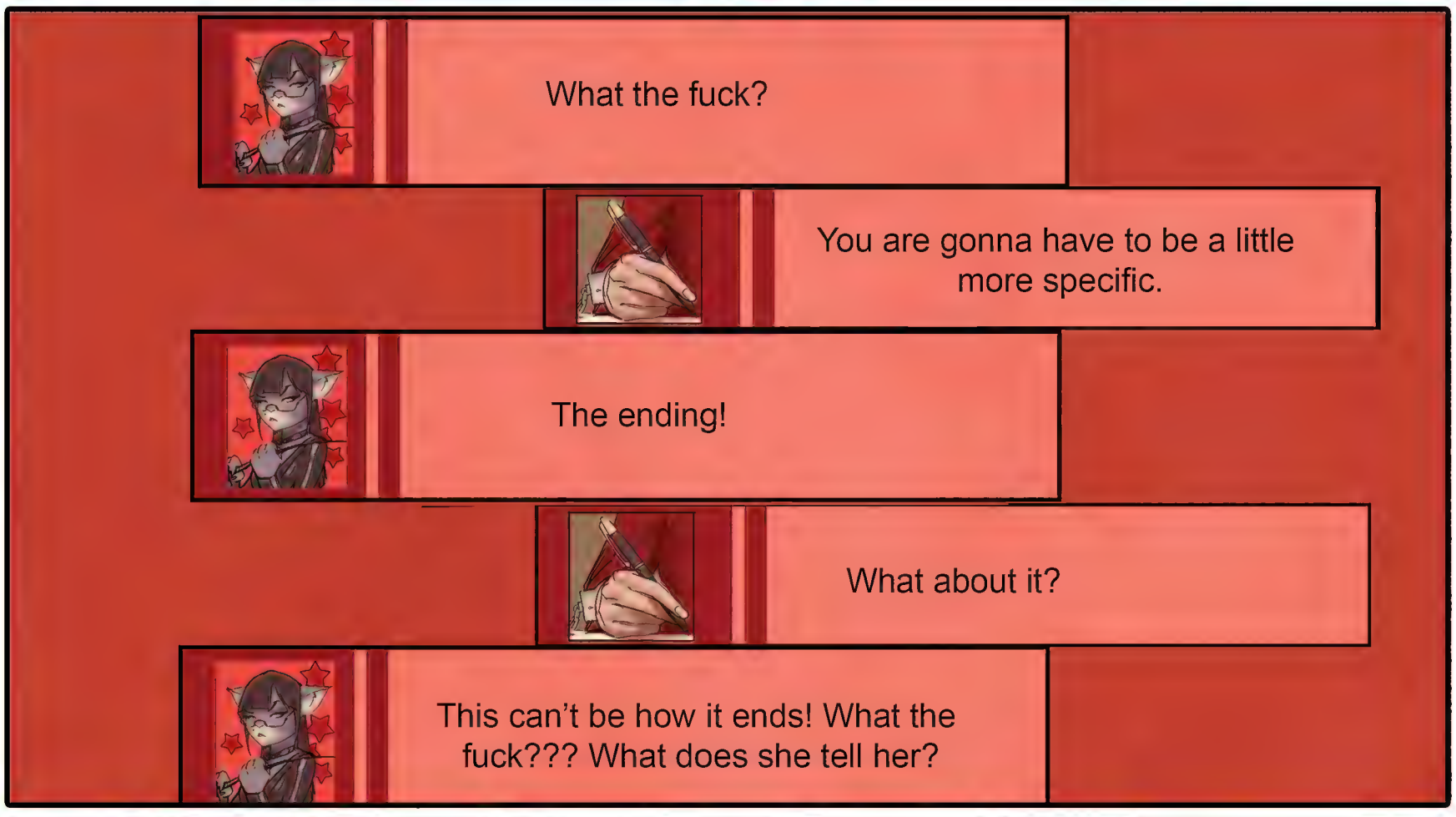
AND TELL YOU WHAT I *TRULY* FEEL FOR YOU!

THE END

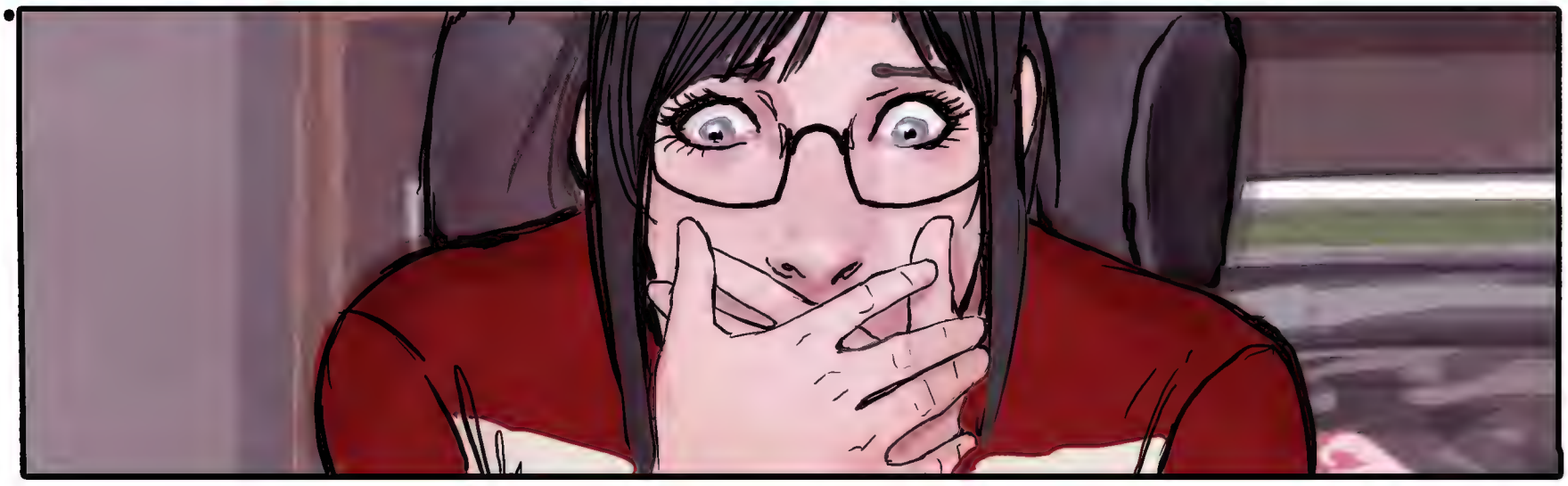
WHAT?!?!


IT WAS AROUND HALF PAST 2 A.M. WHEN THE FIRST COMMENTS STARTED POURING IN...
ALL KINDS OF COMMENTS. PRAISING THE SEX STUFF, QUESTIONING THE CLIFFHANGERS...
THE WONDERFUL STUFF AND THE TROLLISH BULLSHIT.
USUALLY I LOVED READING THEM, BUT THAT EVENING I ONLY READ TO DISTRACT MYSELF, AS THERE WAS ONLY ONE COMMENT I WAS WAITING FOR.


2:34 A.M. THE COMMENT ARRIVED.
From allycat: WTF!?


What the fuck?
You are gonna have to be a little more specific.
The ending!
What about it?
This can't be how it ends! What the fuck??? What does she tell her?

Meet me at the Crimson for the new years party and i'll tell you!



Friends celebrating new year together, huh?
No. i'm asking you out on a date!
WAIT!
Sarcasm?
No! i mean it! I don't want your friendship! It's not enough!
Allison, will you go out with me?

WELL, I MEAN...THIS IS HOW SHE DESCRIBED THE MOMENT TO ME.

I'll be there!

SHE'LL BE THERE...

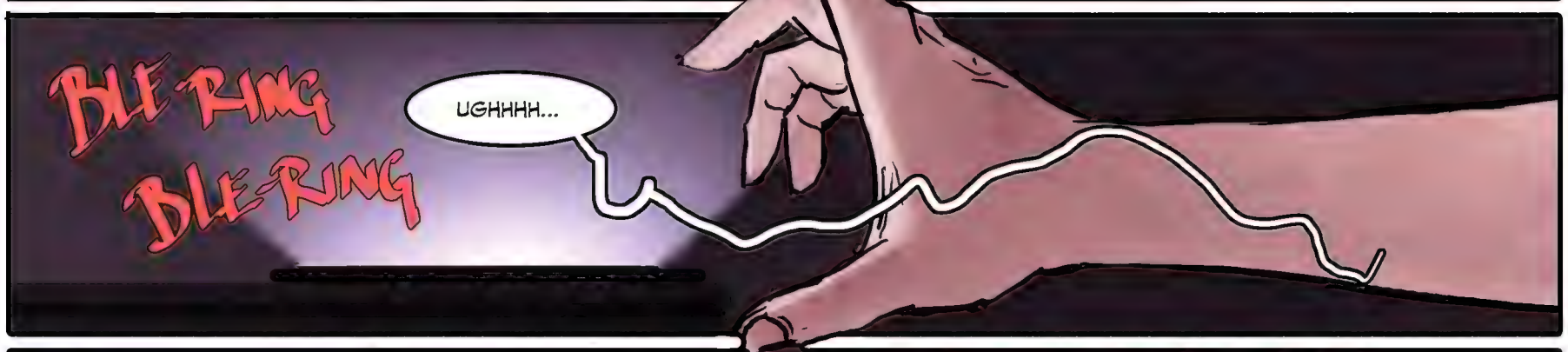
HEH...

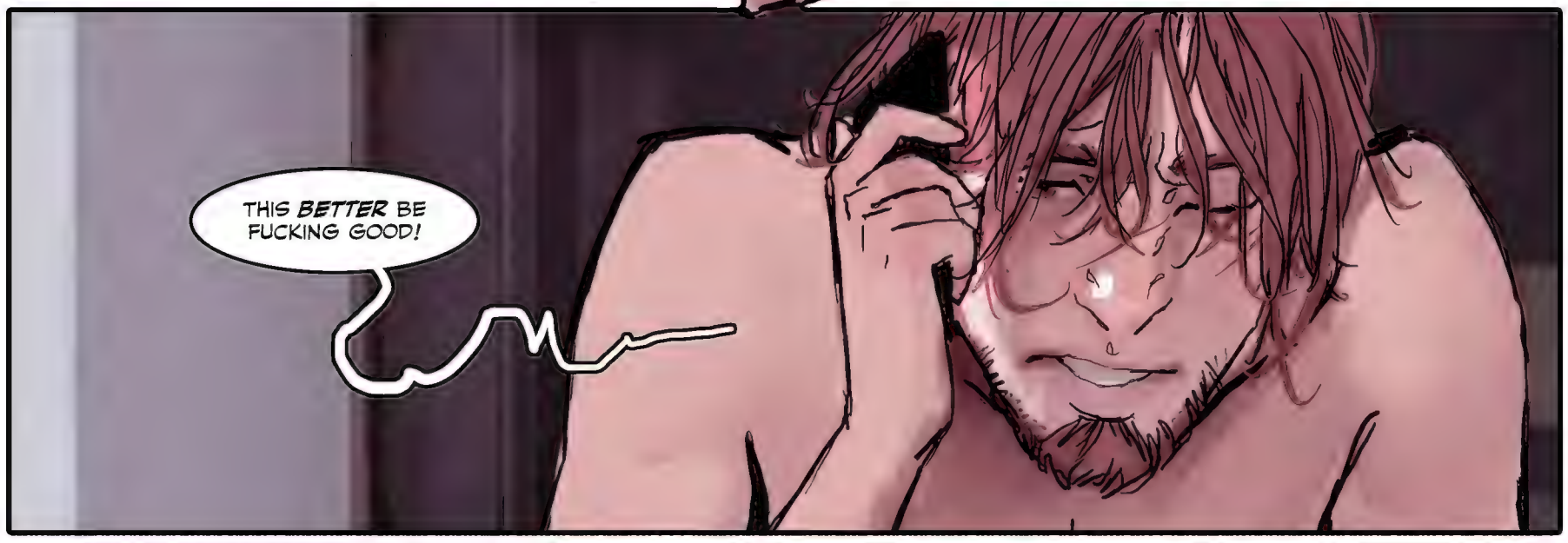
OH GOD... ***PLEASE,*** HEART, DON'T GIVE ME A STROKE NOW!

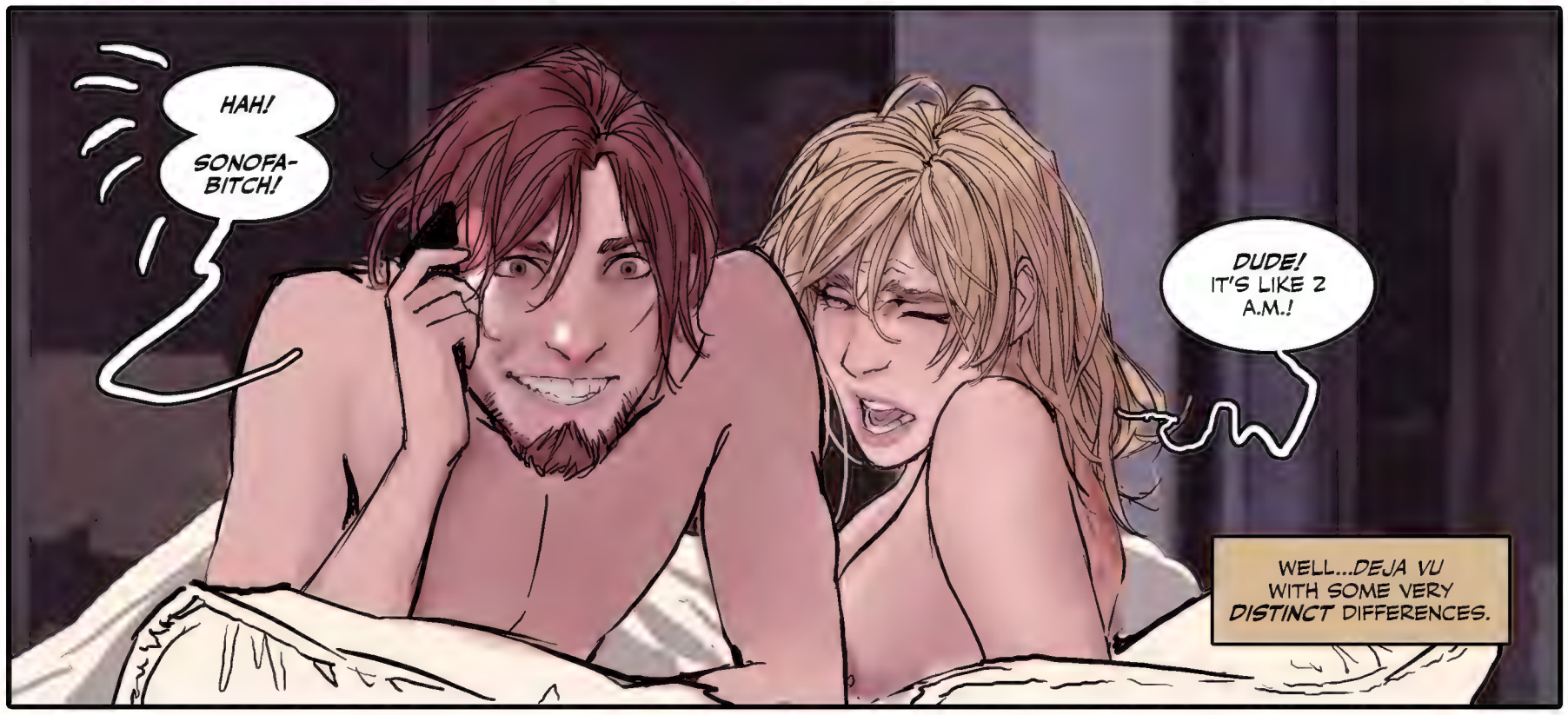
I CAN'T DIE JUST YET!

HEH! I WAS HANDLING IT WELL.

AND YES, THE WHOLE SITUATION HAD AN OVERWHELMING AROMA OF *DEJA VU!*


BLE-RING
BLE-RING
UGHHHH...


THIS BETTER BE FUCKING GOOD!


HAH!
SONOFA-BITCH!
DUDE! IT'S LIKE 2 A.M.!
WELL...DEJA VU WITH SOME VERY DISTINCT DIFFERENCES.

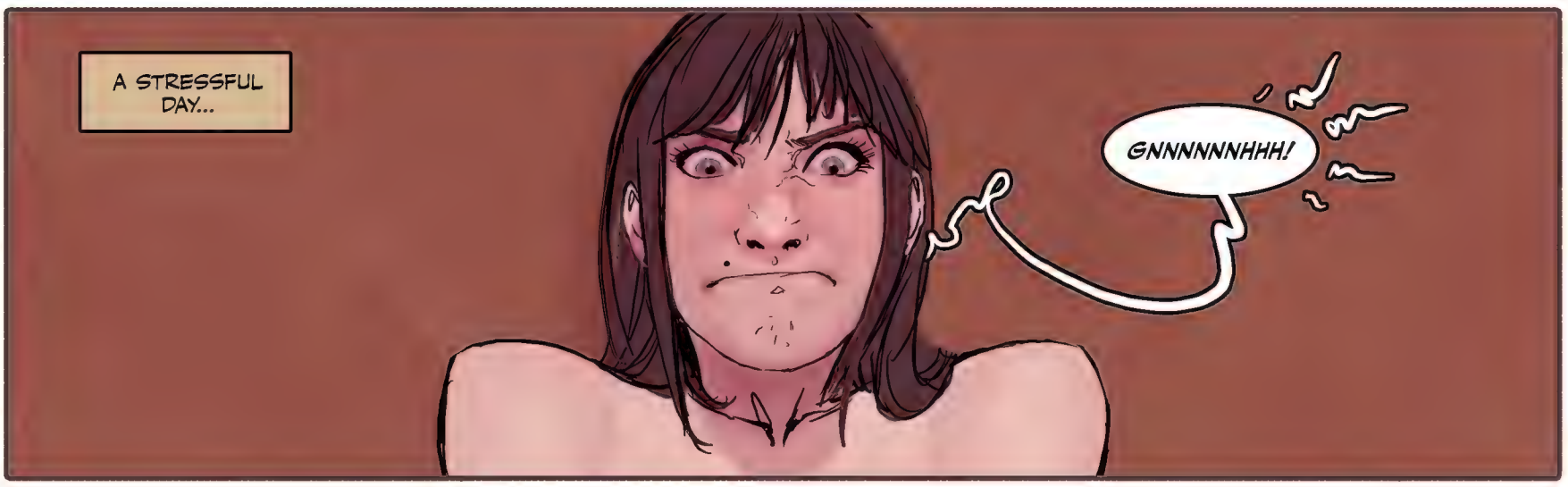
I WILL SKIP DECEMBER 30TH... NOT MUCH TO SAY ABOUT IT. AND WHAT THERE IS TO BE SAID IS BEST LEFT FOR ANOTHER STORY AT A LATER TIME.

IT PRETTY MUCH CAME DOWN TO BOTH LISA AND ME PESTERING ANNE FOR OPINIONS ON A WHOLE BUNCH OF STUFF.

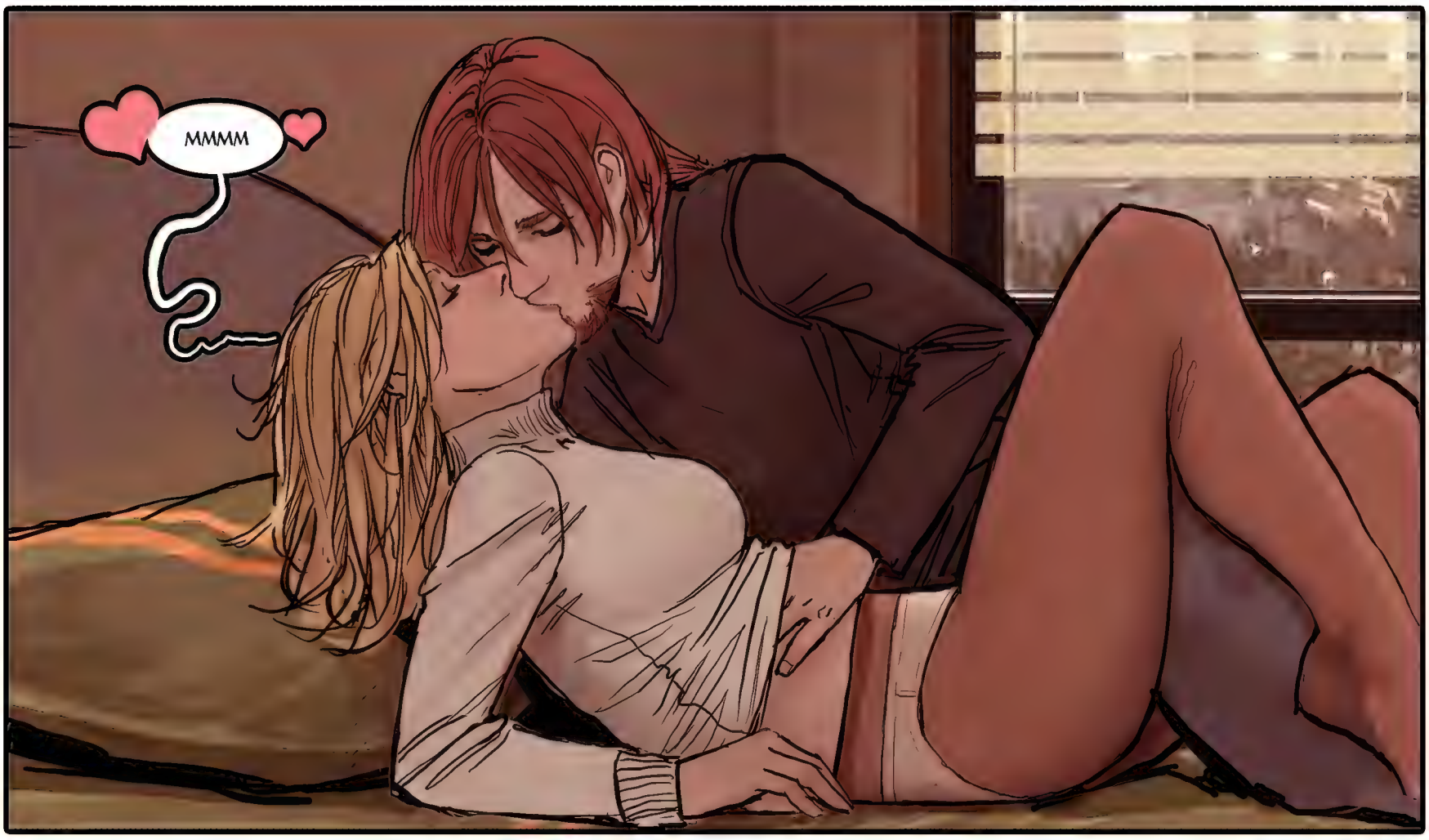
TO QUOTE ANNE: *"THAT DAY WAS LIKE BABYSITTING TWO TODDLERS ON A SUGAR HIGH!"*

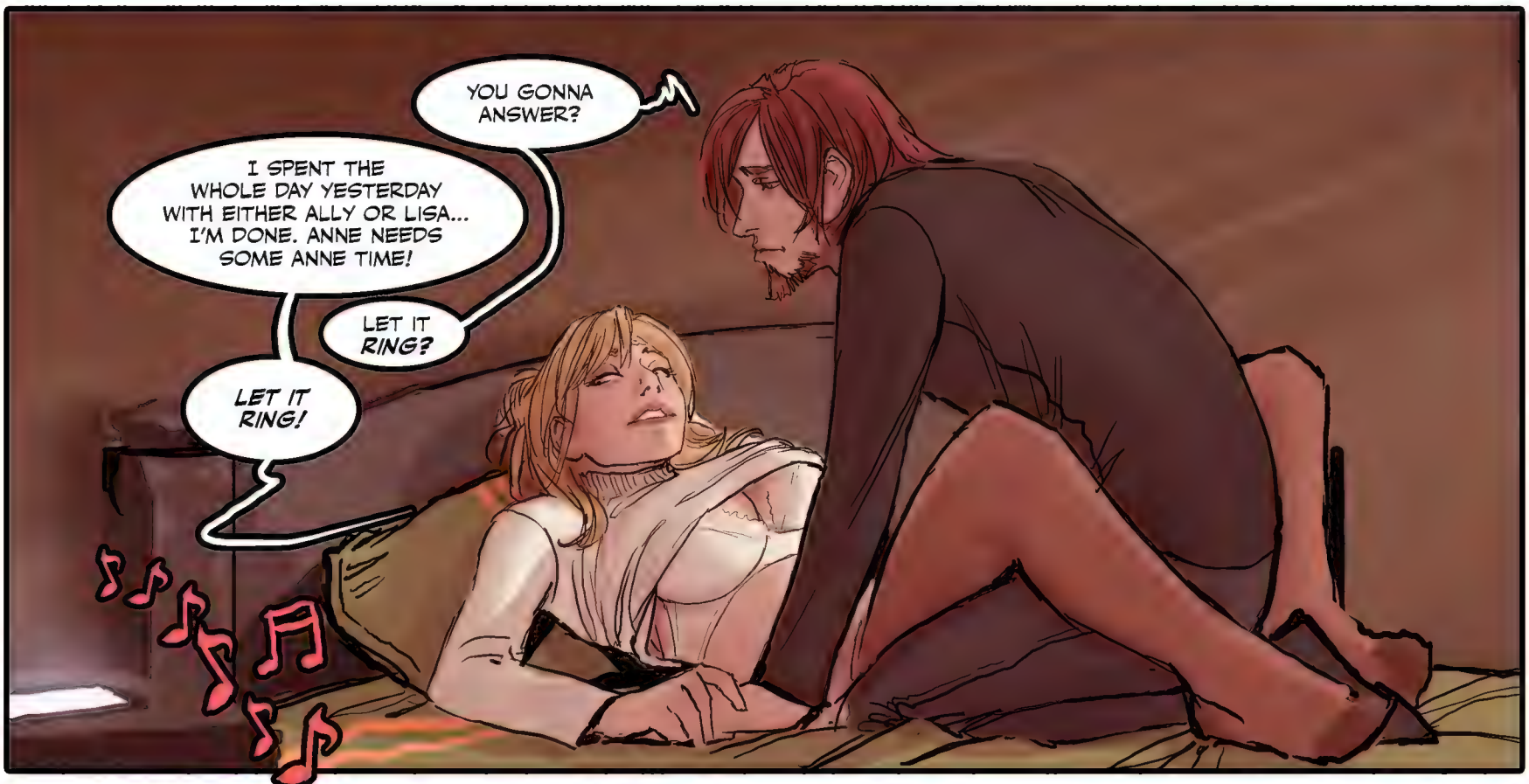
SO WE'LL JUST SKIP IT AND GO STRAIGHT TO THE BIG DAY.

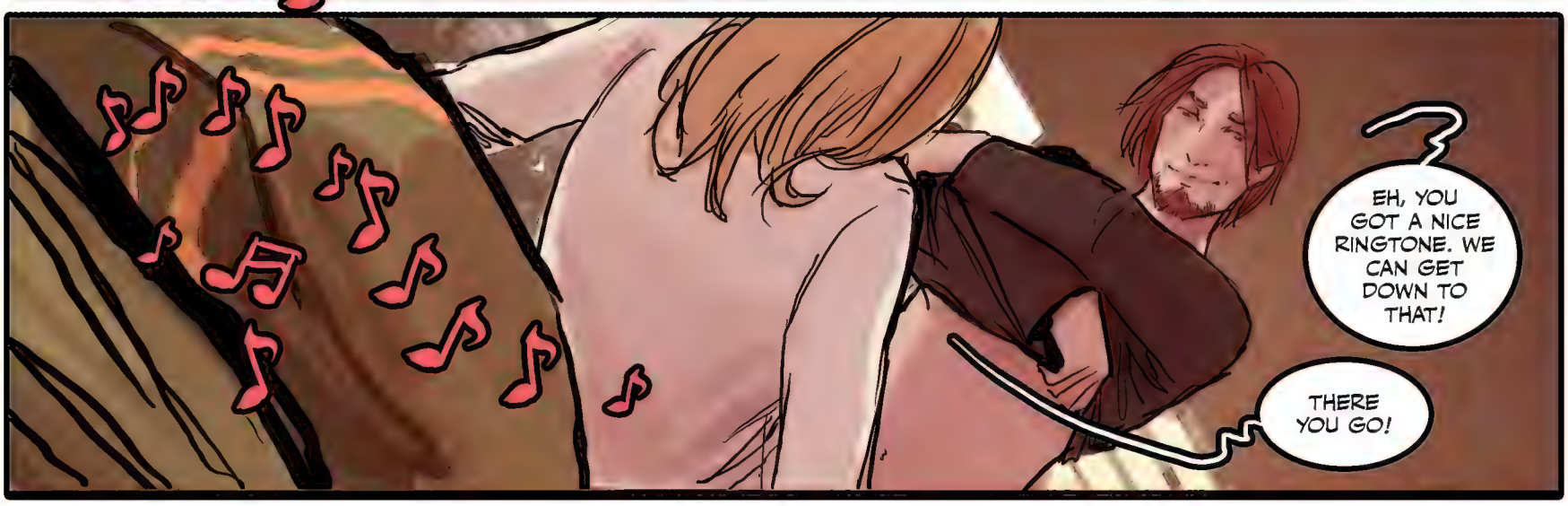
DECEMBER 31ST!

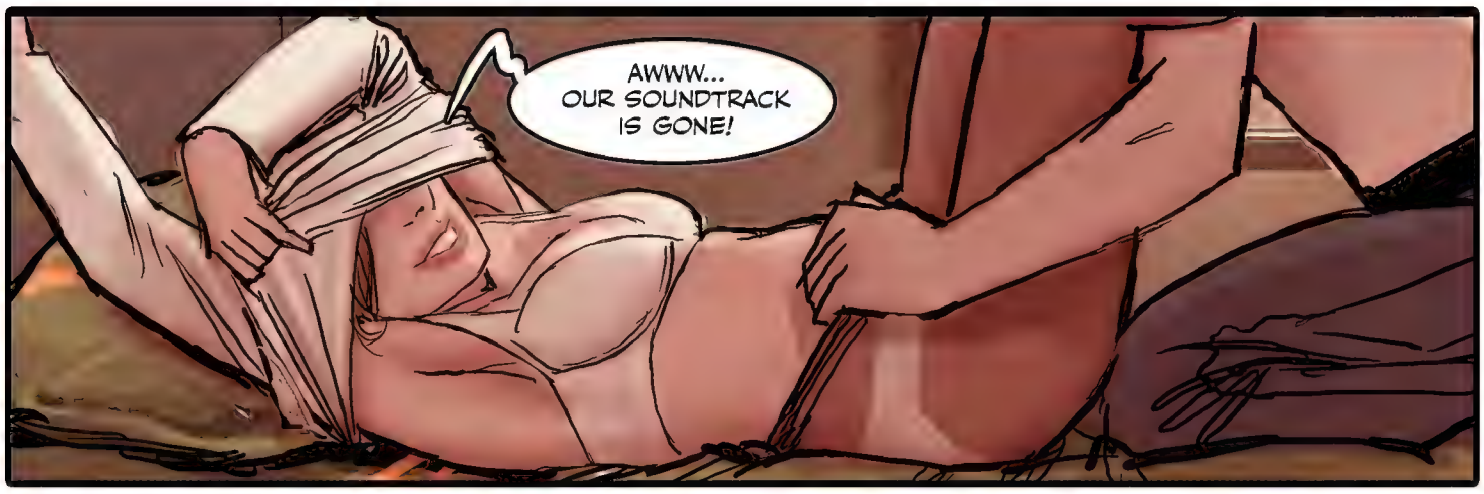


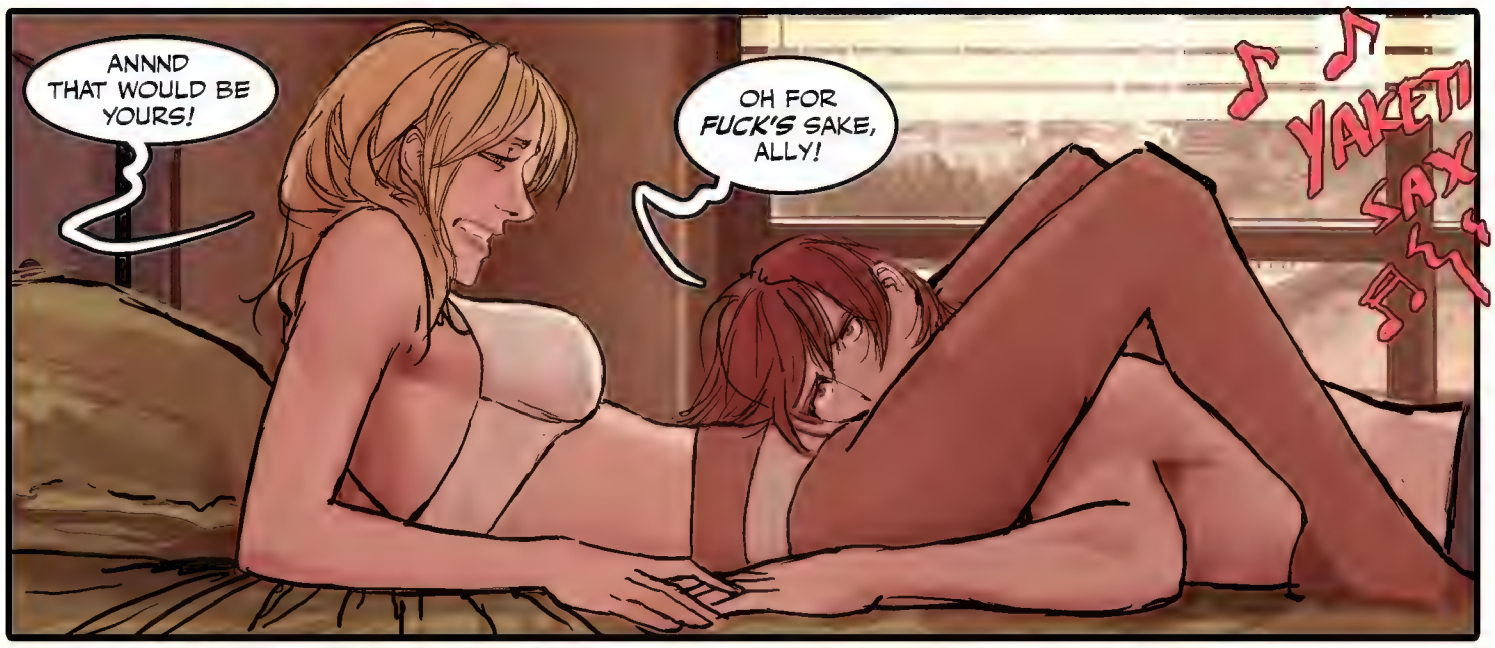
COME ON, LIVER, WORK WITH ME HERE! GIVE STOMACH SOME ROOM!
FUN FACT ABOUT APPLYING EXCESSIVE STRAIN ON A FRESHLY HEALED TENDON INJURY:
COME ON! COME OOOON!
CRICK
DON'T!
ANYHOW, SKIPPING ALLY'S FLOOD OF PROFANITIES AND MOVING ON!

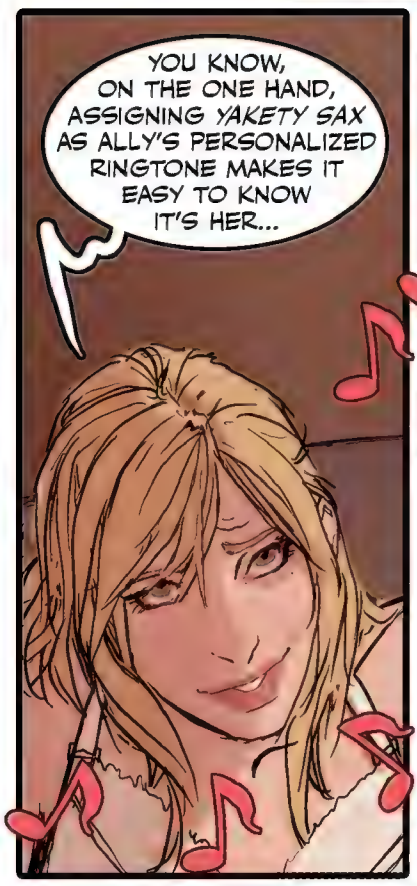

MMMM

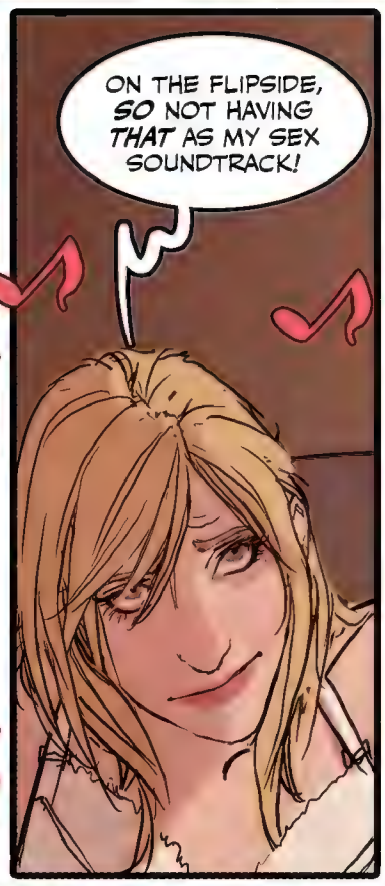

YOU GONNA ANSWER?
I SPENT THE WHOLE DAY YESTERDAY WITH EITHER ALLY OR LISA... I'M DONE. ANNE NEEDS SOME ANNE TIME!
LET IT *RING?*
LET IT RING!

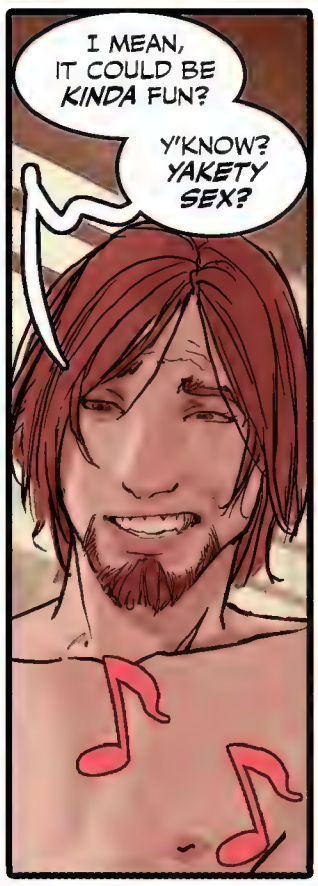

EH, YOU GOT A NICE RINGTONE. WE CAN GET DOWN TO THAT!
THERE YOU GO!

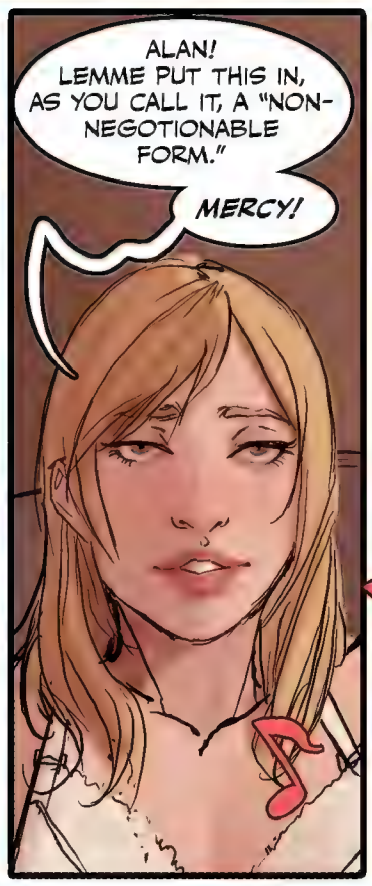

AWWW... OUR SOUNDTRACK IS GONE!

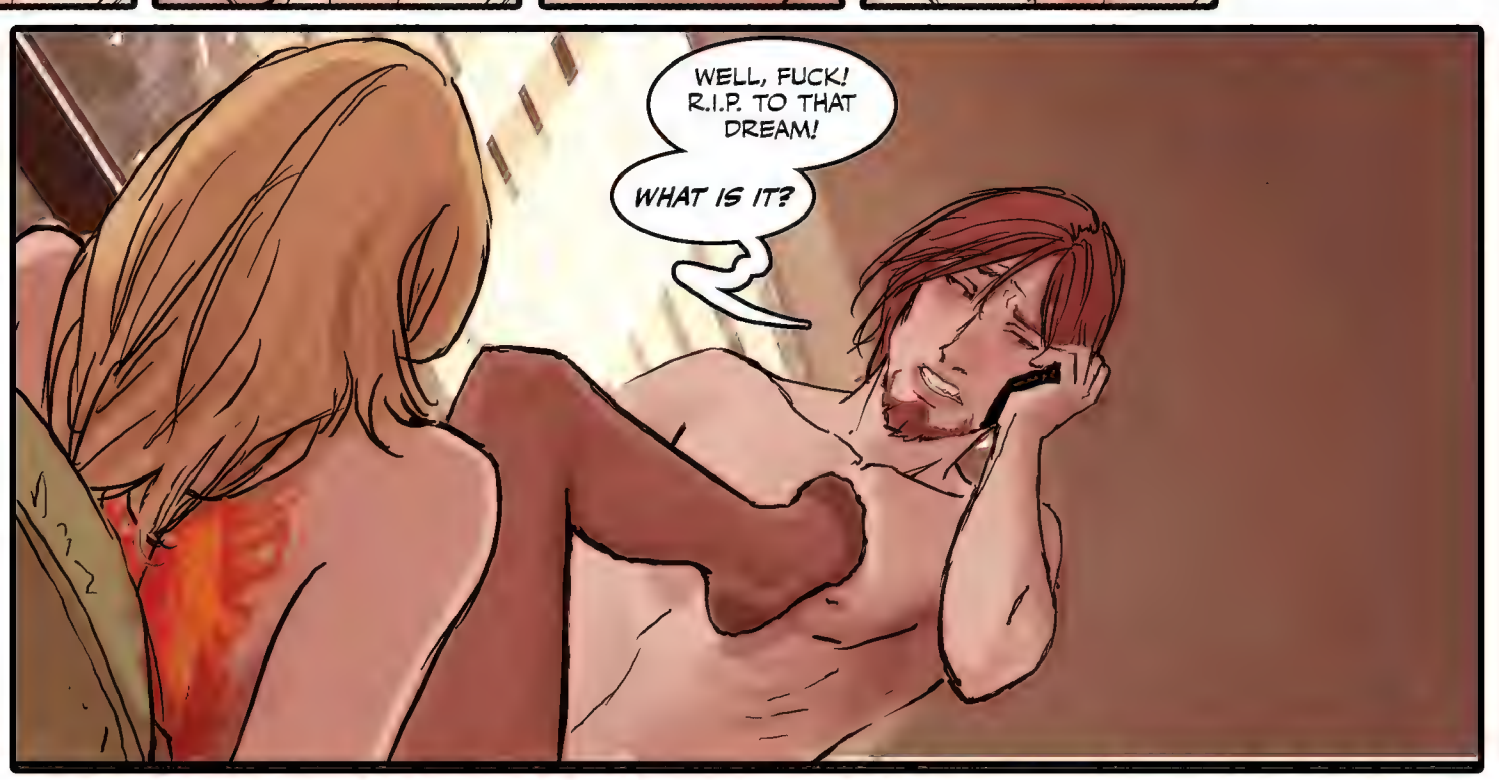

ANNND THAT WOULD BE YOURS!
OH FOR FUCK'S SAKE, ALLY!
YAKETI SAX

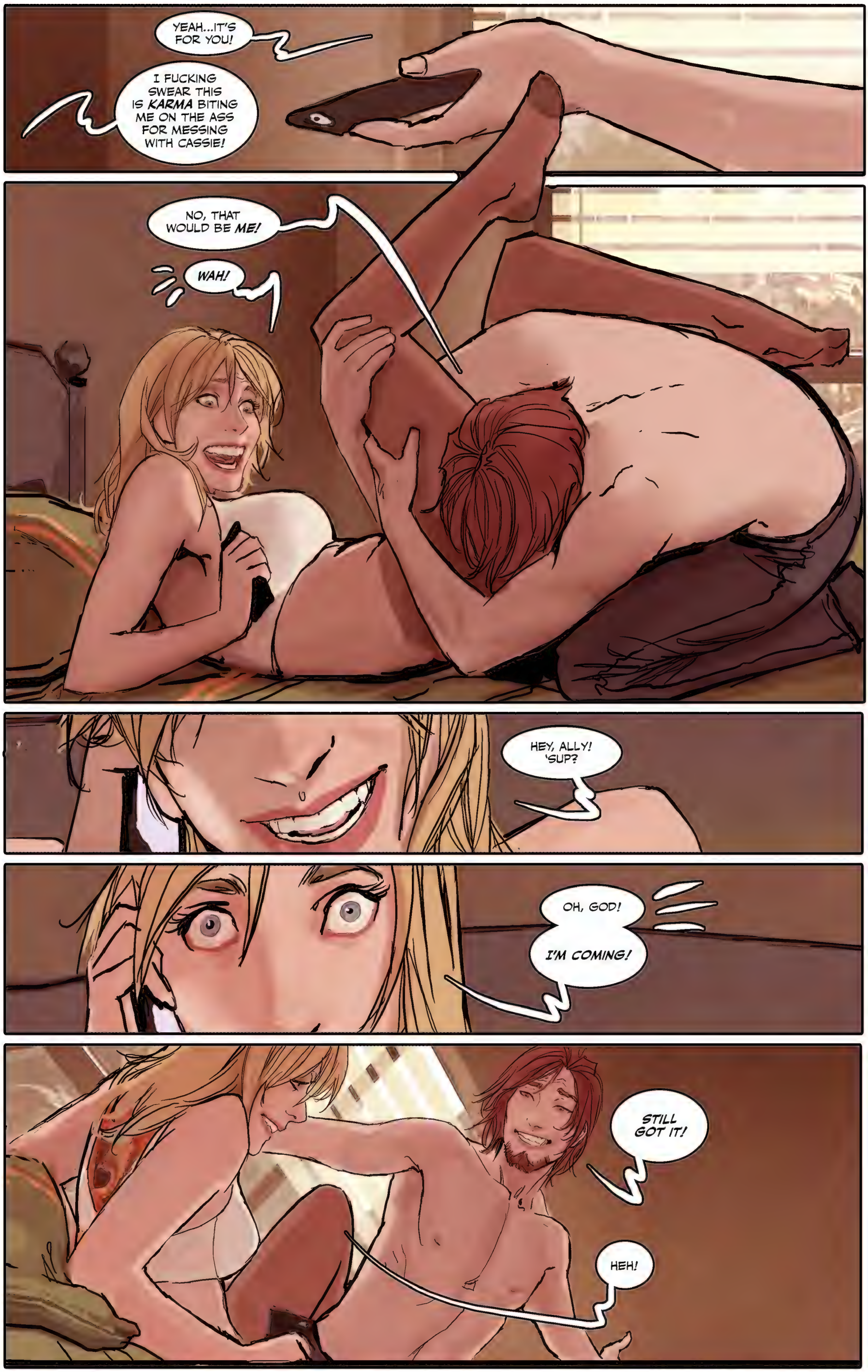

YOU KNOW, ON THE ONE HAND, ASSIGNING YAKETY SAX AS ALLY'S PERSONALIZED RINGTONE MAKES IT EASY TO KNOW IT'S HER...

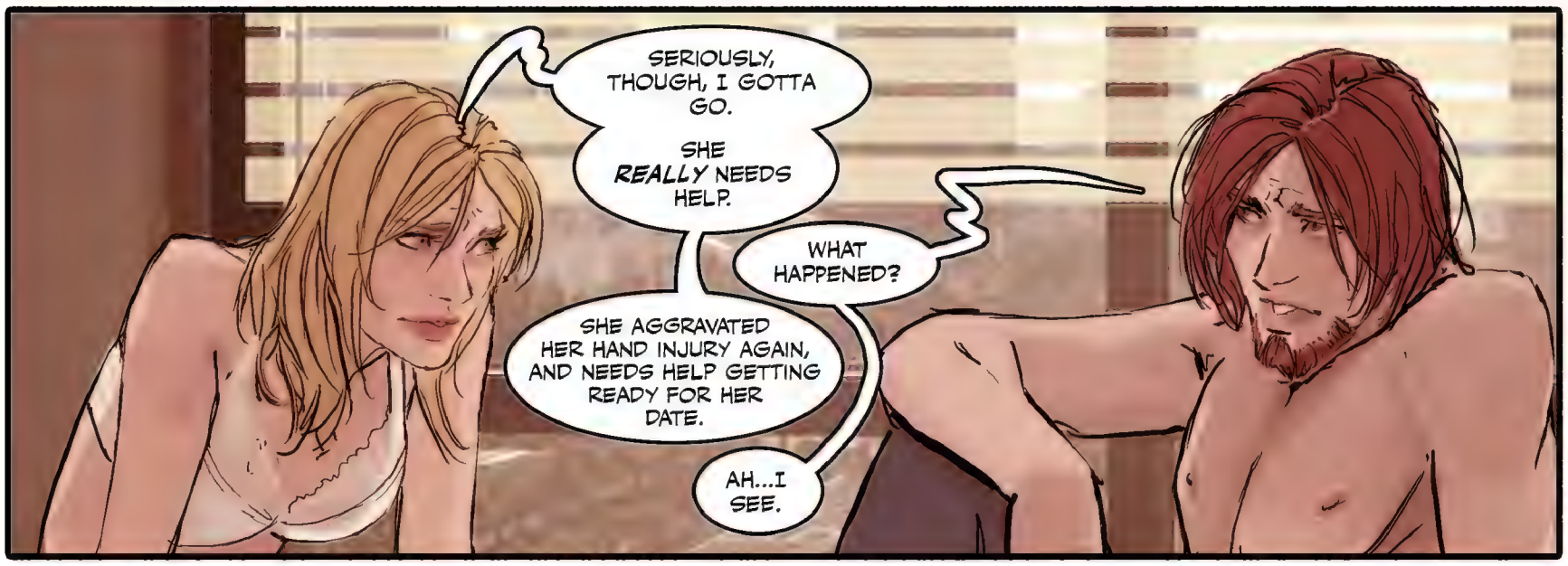

ON THE FLIPSIDE, SO NOT HAVING THAT AS MY SEX SOUNDTRACK!

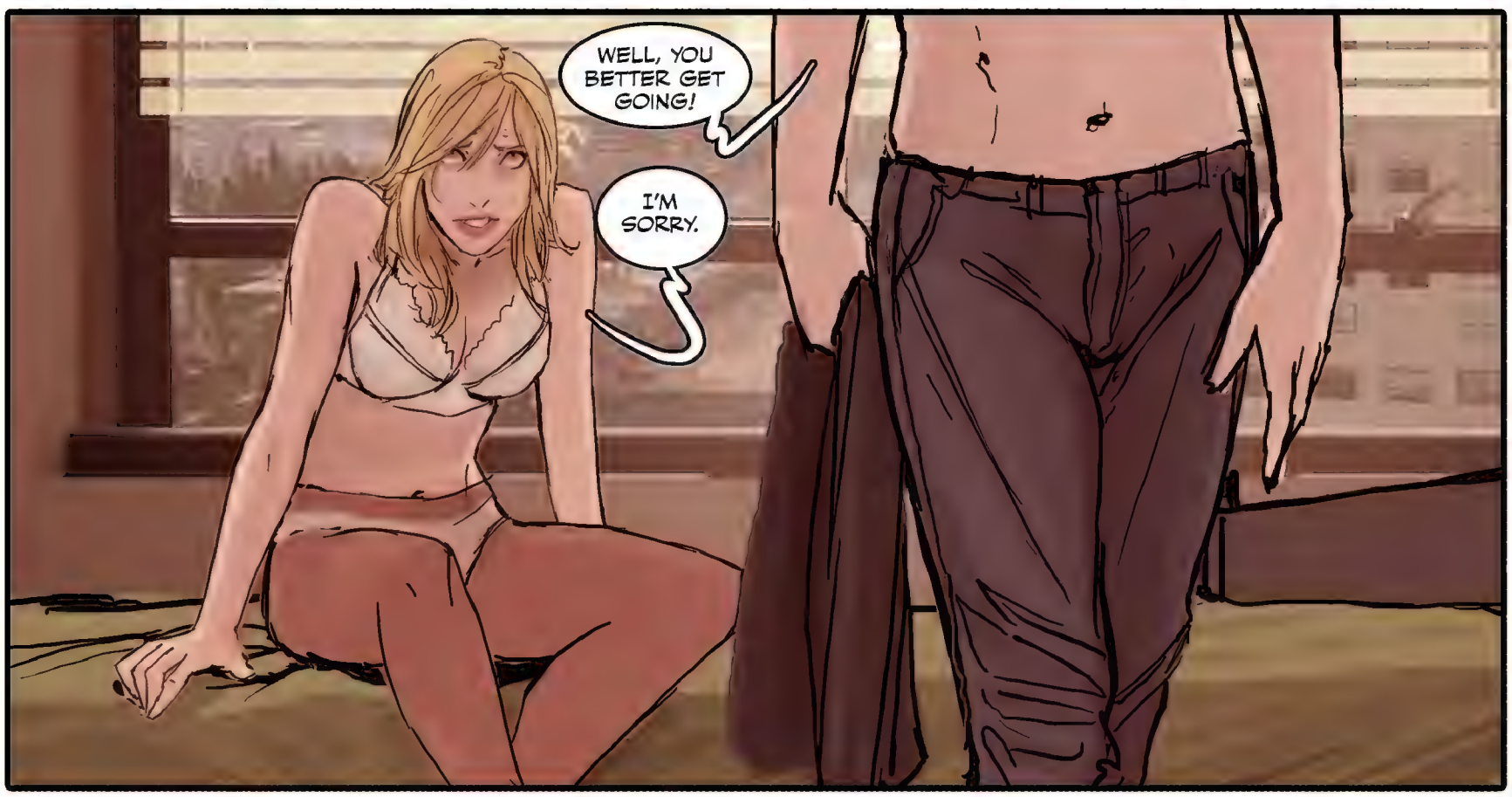

I MEAN, IT COULD BE KINDA FUN?
Y'KNOW? YAKETY SEX?

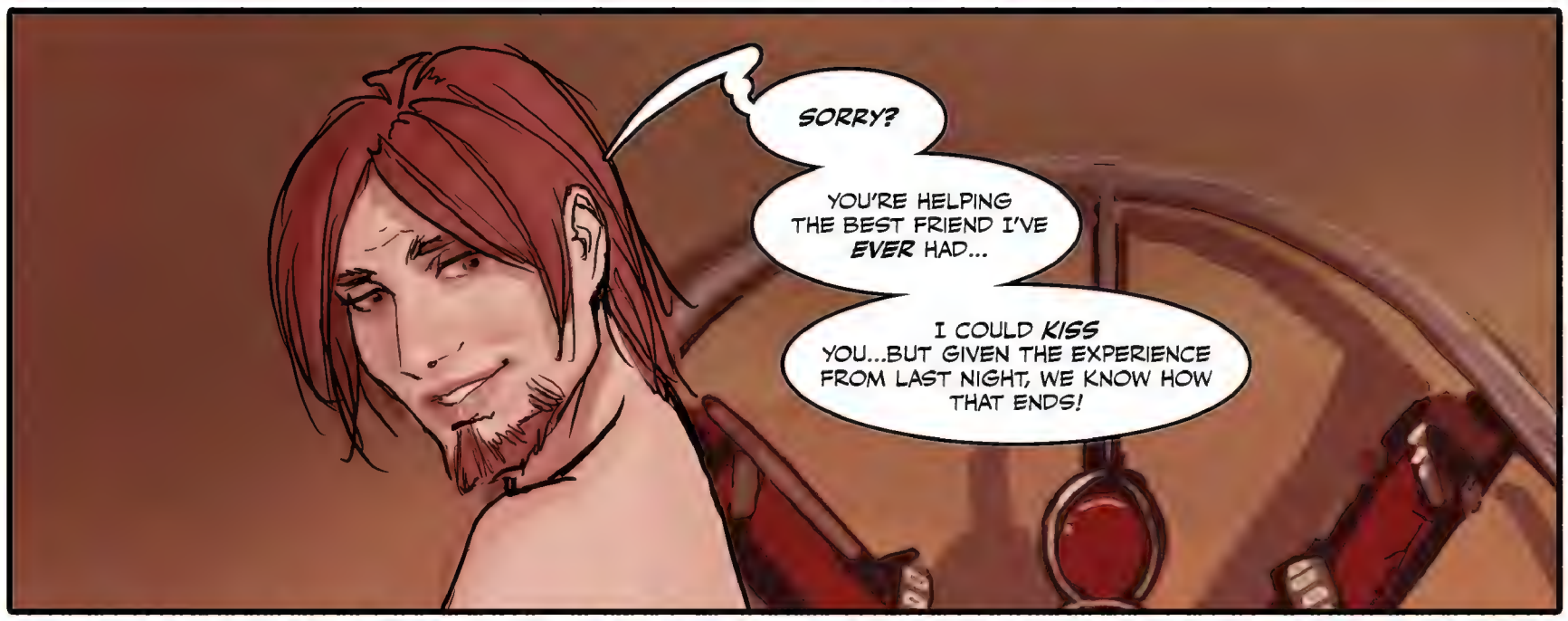

ALAN! LEMME PUT THIS IN, AS YOU CALL IT, A "NON-NEGOTIONABLE FORM."
MERCY!

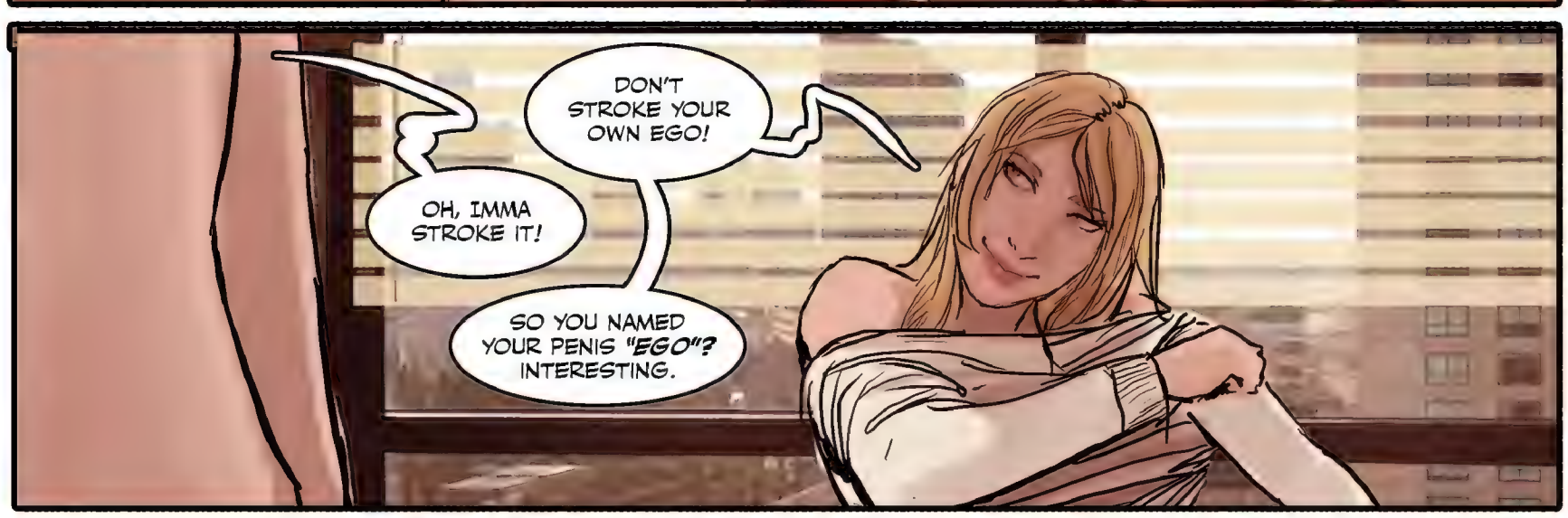

WELL, FUCK! R.I.P. TO THAT DREAM!
WHAT IS IT?

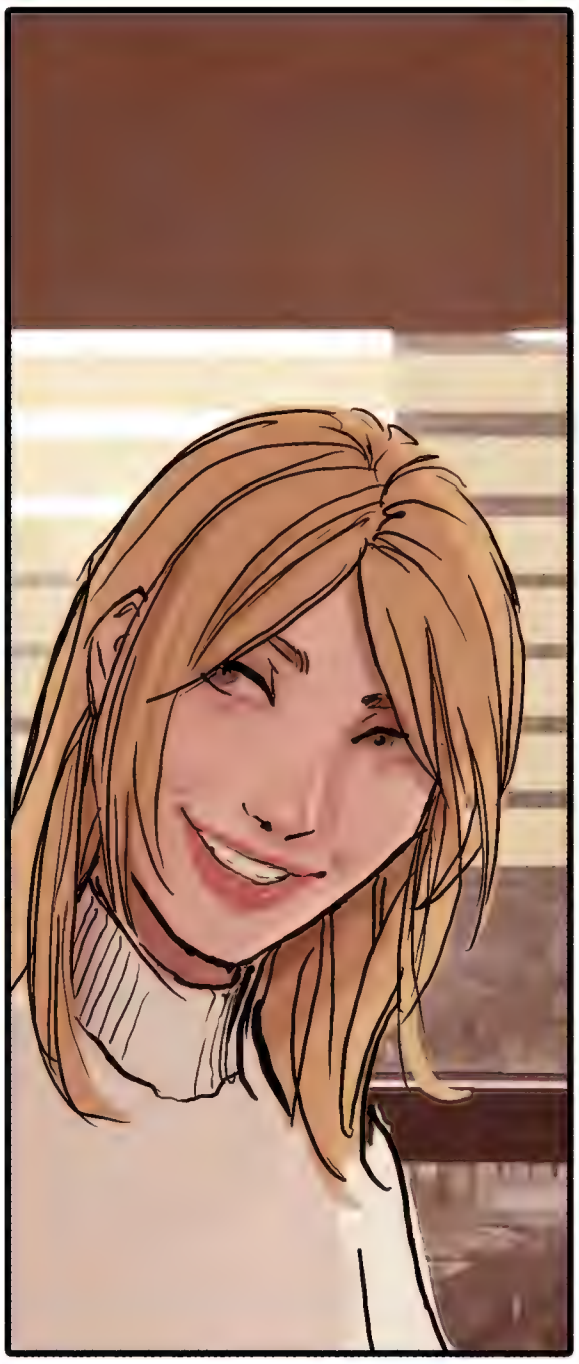

YEAH...IT'S FOR YOU!
I FUCKING SWEAR THIS IS KARMA BITING ME ON THE ASS FOR MESSING WITH CASSIE!
NO, THAT WOULD BE ME!
WAH!
HEY, ALLY! 'SUP?
OH, GOD!
I'M COMING!
STILL GOT IT!
HEH!


SERIOUSLY, THOUGH, I GOTTA GO.
SHE *REALLY* NEEDS HELP.
WHAT HAPPENED?
SHE AGGRAVATED HER HAND INJURY AGAIN, AND NEEDS HELP GETTING READY FOR HER DATE.
AH...I SEE.

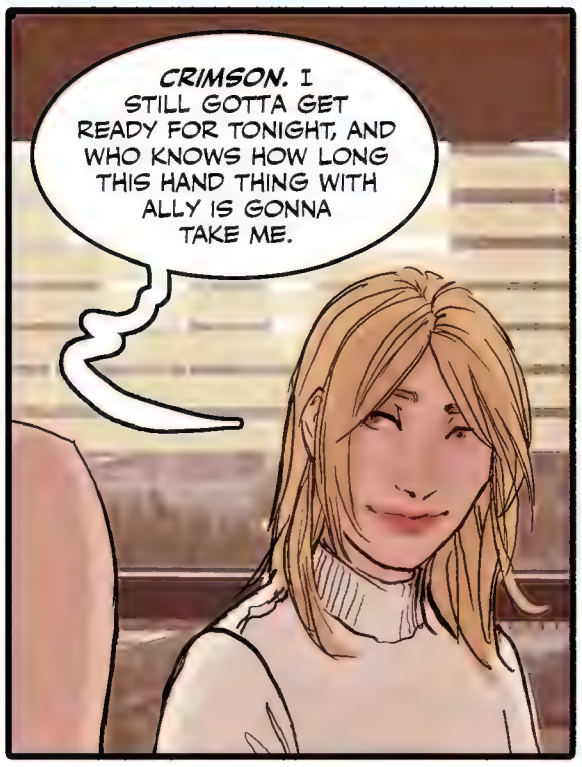

WELL, YOU BETTER GET GOING!
I'M SORRY.

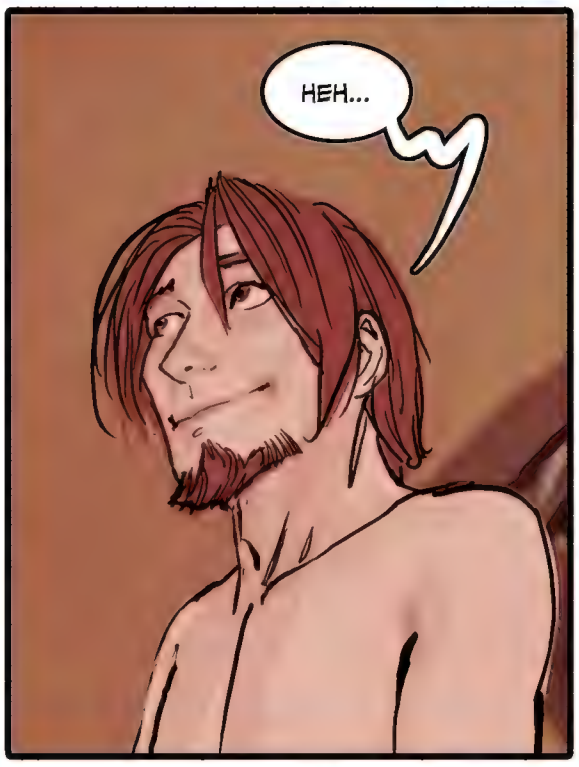

SORRY?
YOU'RE HELPING THE BEST FRIEND I'VE *EVER* HAD...
I COULD *KISS* YOU...BUT GIVEN THE EXPERIENCE FROM LAST NIGHT, WE KNOW HOW THAT ENDS!

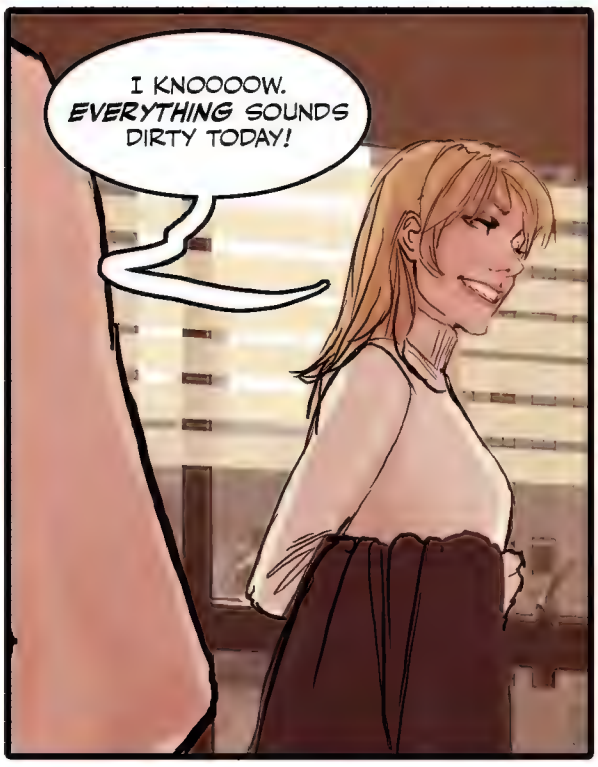

DON'T STROKE YOUR OWN EGO!
OH, IMMA STROKE IT!
SO YOU NAMED YOUR PENIS *"EGO"?* INTERESTING.

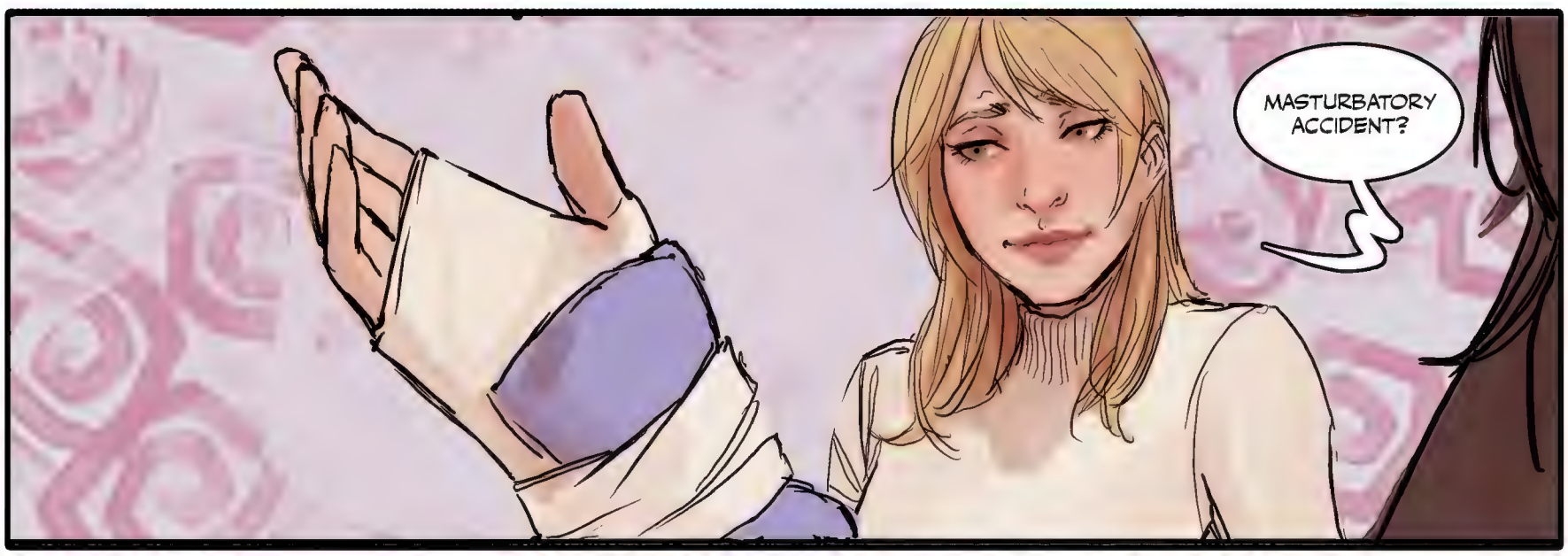


YOU COMING BACK HERE, OR DO WE MEET AT THE CRIMSON?


CRIMSON. I STILL GOTTA GET READY FOR TONIGHT, AND WHO KNOWS HOW LONG THIS HAND THING WITH ALLY IS GONNA TAKE ME.


HEH...

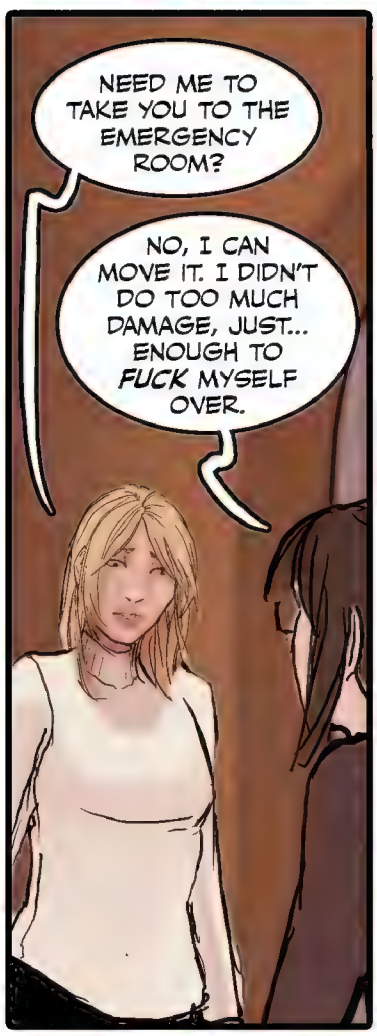

I KNOOOOW. *EVERYTHING* SOUNDS DIRTY TODAY!

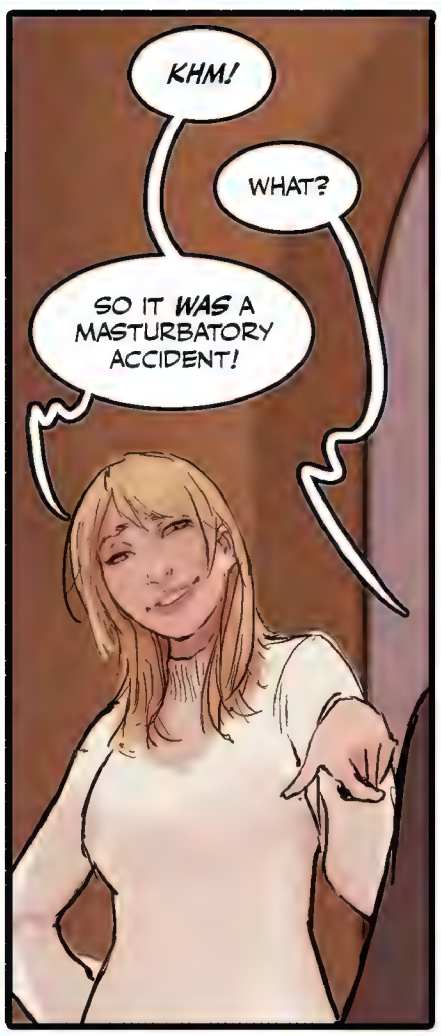

MASTURBATORY ACCIDENT?

UGH...

BEEN SITTING AROUND FOR TWO MONTHS... PUT ON A FEW...

TRIED FORCING MYSELF INTO A CORSET, AND THE LIGAMENT GAVE IN.

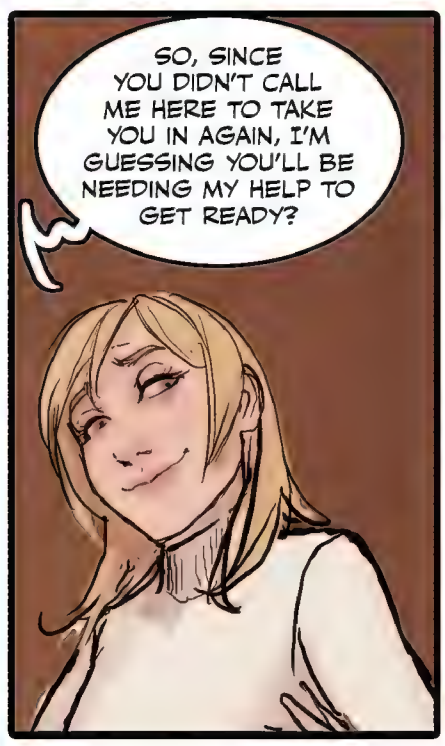

NEED ME TO TAKE YOU TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM?
NO, I CAN MOVE IT. I DIDN'T DO TOO MUCH DAMAGE, JUST... ENOUGH TO *FUCK* MYSELF OVER.


KHM!
WHAT?
SO IT *WAS* A MASTURBATORY ACCIDENT!

JUST... IMAGINE THE *MIDDLE* ONE UP!

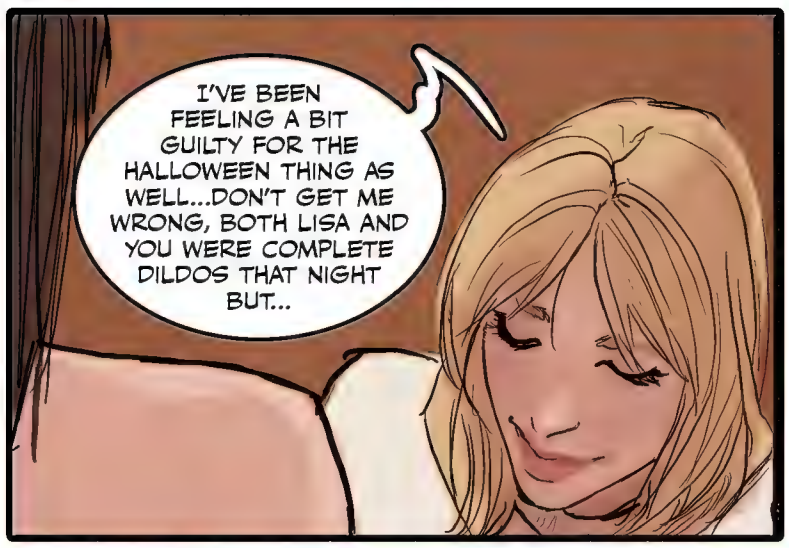
SO, WHEN'S THE BIG DATE?

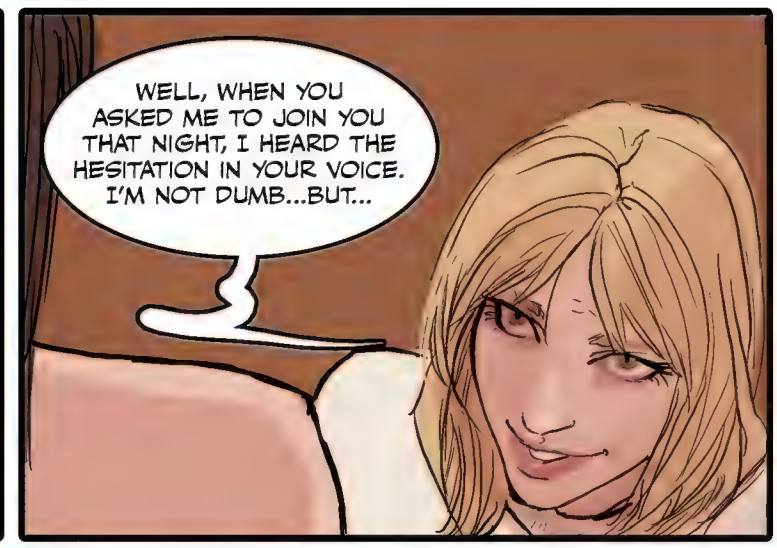
IN THREE HOURS!

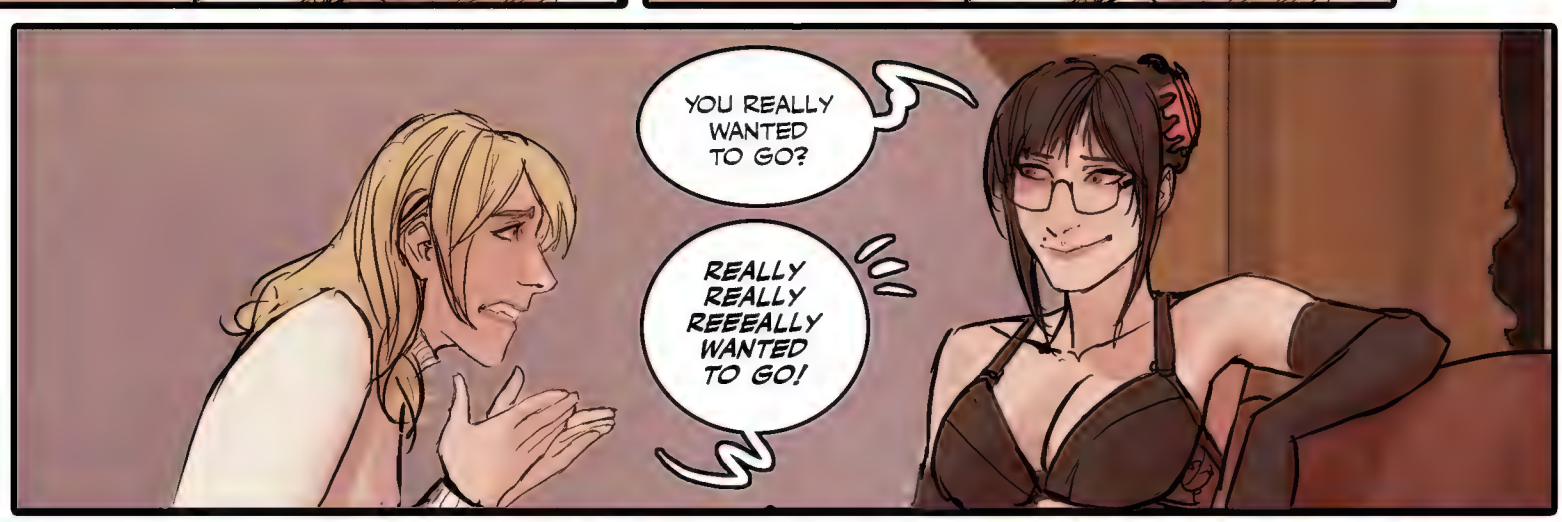

SO, SINCE YOU DIDN'T CALL ME HERE TO TAKE YOU IN AGAIN, I'M GUESSING YOU'LL BE NEEDING MY HELP TO GET READY?

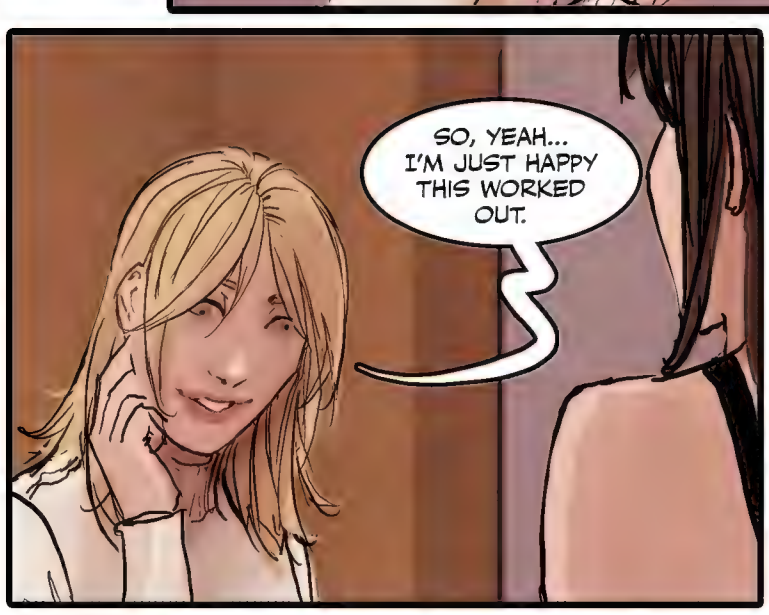
PLEASE!

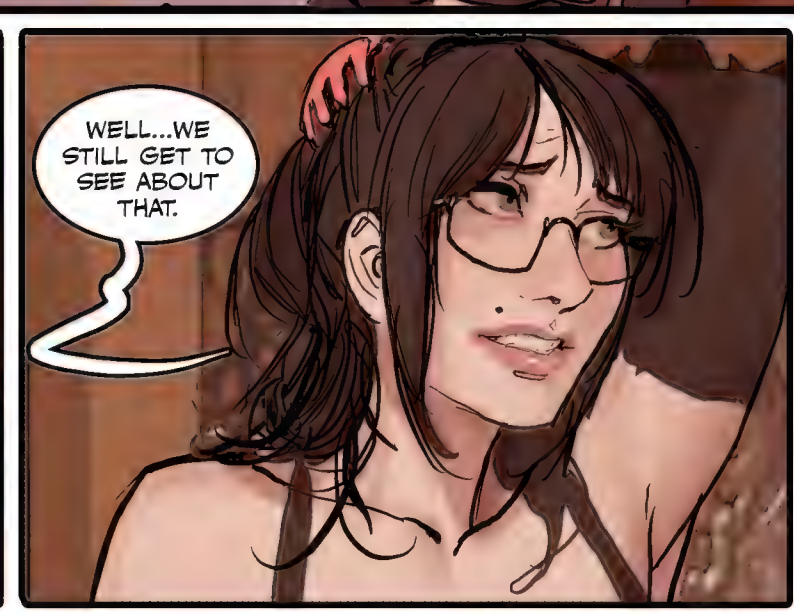
THIS ENOUGH?
YEAH.
CAN IT GO *TIGHTER?*
KEEP GOING! YOU KNOW MY *SAFEWORD!*

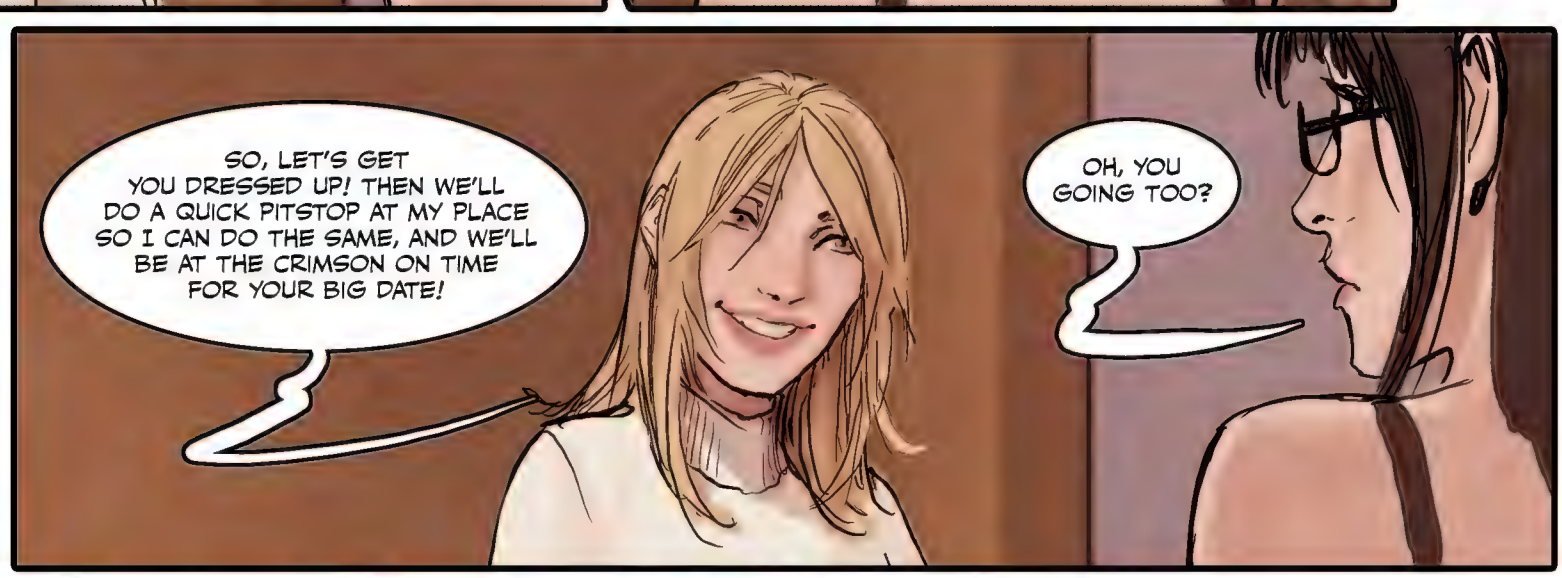

I'VE BEEN FEELING A BIT GUILTY FOR THE HALLOWEEN THING AS WELL...DON'T GET ME WRONG, BOTH LISA AND YOU WERE COMPLETE DILDOS THAT NIGHT BUT...

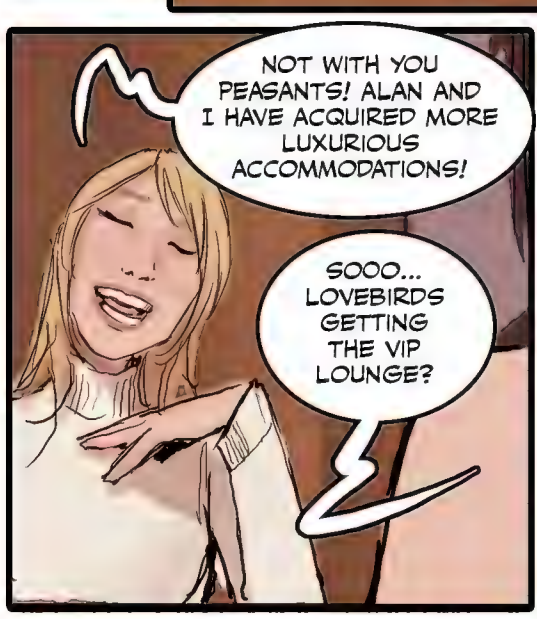

WELL, WHEN YOU ASKED ME TO JOIN YOU THAT NIGHT, I HEARD THE HESITATION IN YOUR VOICE. I'M NOT DUMB...BUT...

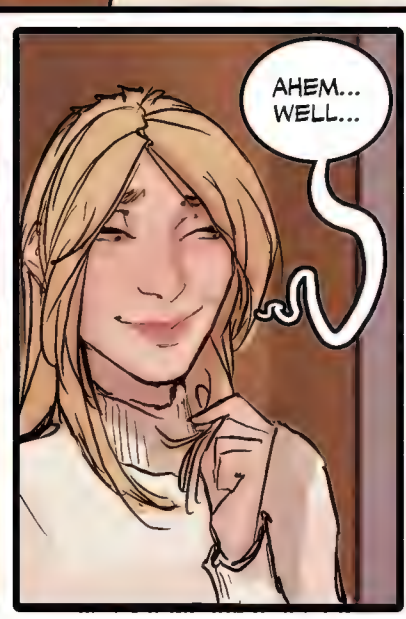

YOU REALLY WANTED TO GO?
REALLY REALLY REEEALLY WANTED TO GO!

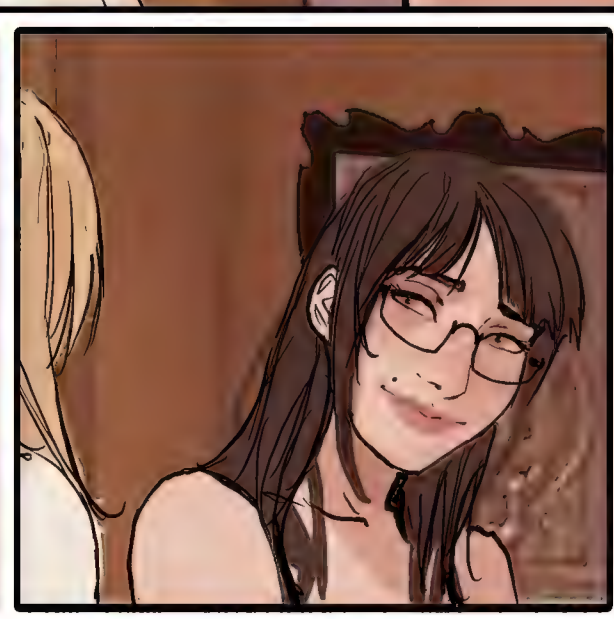

SO, YEAH... I'M JUST HAPPY THIS WORKED OUT.

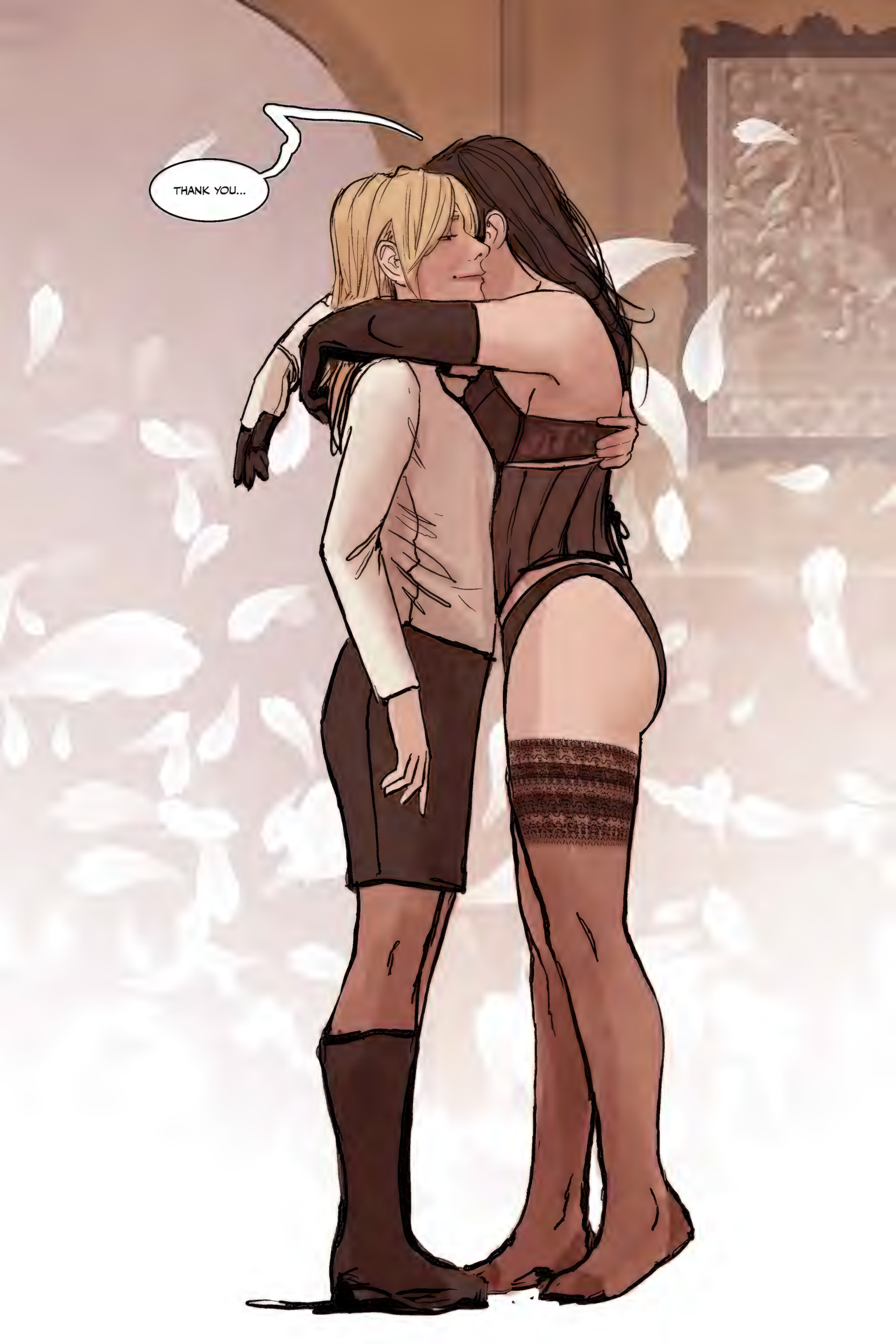

WELL...WE STILL GET TO SEE ABOUT THAT.


SO, LET'S GET YOU DRESSED UP! THEN WE'LL DO A QUICK PITSTOP AT MY PLACE SO I CAN DO THE SAME, AND WE'LL BE AT THE CRIMSON ON TIME FOR YOUR BIG DATE!
OH, YOU GOING TOO?


NOT WITH YOU PEASANTS! ALAN AND I HAVE ACQUIRED MORE LUXURIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS!
SOOO... LOVEBIRDS GETTING THE VIP LOUNGE?


AHEM... WELL...



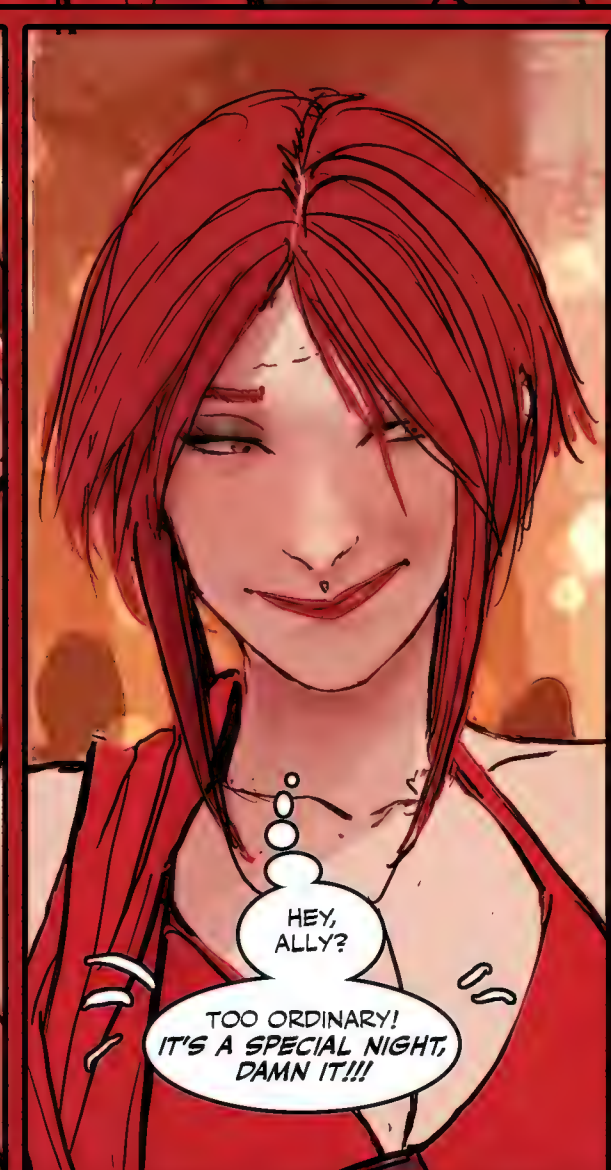

THANK YOU...

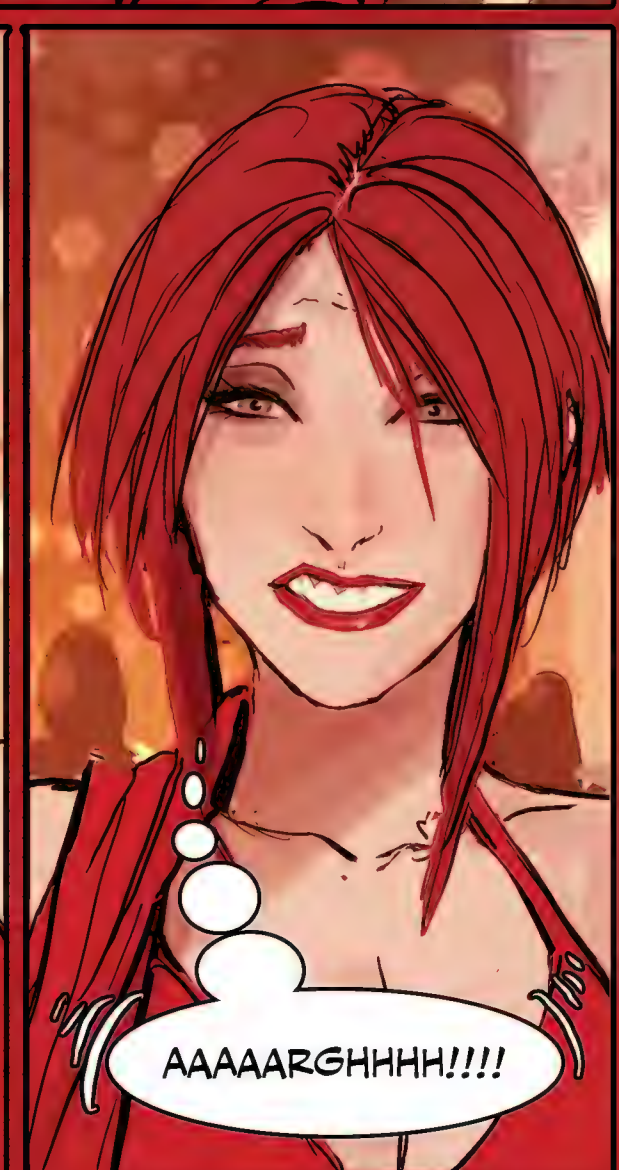
PETALS AND PUZZLES AND PAGES OF STORIES...
ALL THE STRANGE PIECES OF THE BRIDGE WE BUILT TOGETHER.
THAT NIGHT, THAT NEW YEAR'S EVE, I GATHERED MY COURAGE AND JOURNEYED ACROSS IT.
FINALLY.

I WILL SEE HER.
I WILL *TALK* TO HER.
106
I WILL TAKE HER HAND AND TELL HER *ALL* I FEEL FOR HER.
I AM A *WRITER!* WORDS ARE MY *ALLIES!*
I WOULD USE THEM TO *SEDUCE* HER IN PERSON, AS I DID WITH MY STORIES.

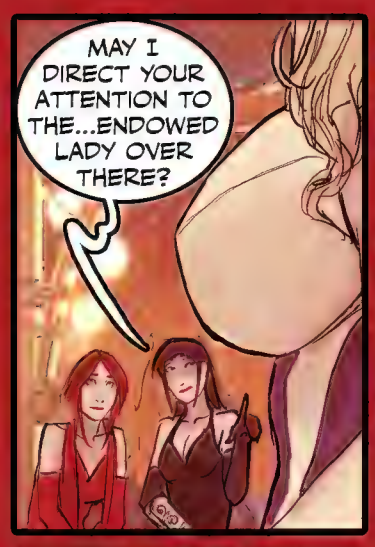
TONIGHT, I WILL SWEEP HER OFF HER FEET.
I WILL SPEAK TO HER AND...
AND...
ASFGASASDJ ASGHDJHFG!?
ERROR! WORDS NOT FOUND!

HEY THERE, SEXY?
OH GOD, NO!
HELLO, GORGEOUS?
FOR FUCK'S SAKE, MAY AS WELL OPEN BY ASKING HER IF IT HURT WHEN SHE FELL FROM HEAVEN!


HEY, ALLY?
TOO ORDINARY! IT'S A SPECIAL NIGHT, DAMN IT!!!


AAAAARGHHHH!!!!

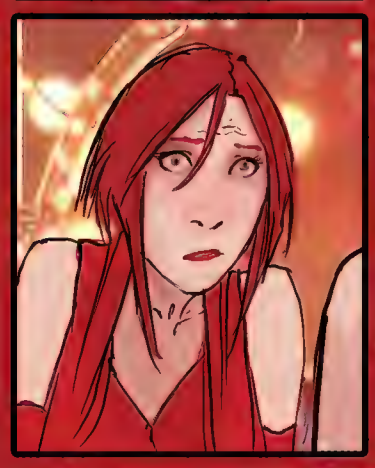
EH-HYAY!
NAILED IT!
...
UH...LISTEN! I-I'M SORRY... I...I DON'T KNOW HOW TO...DATE YOU.
SOOOO... I'M CHOKING A BIT HERE!
OH, THANK GOD! I'VE BEEN SITTING HERE FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES, TRYING TO LOOK ELEGANT AND COMPOSED, WAITING FOR YOU, AND MEANWHILE I'M SO NERVOUS I COULD PU...UM...VERY NERVOUS!
IN FACT, YOU WANNA KNOW HOW BAD IT GOT FOR ME?
SURE!
WARNING YOU THOUGH, IT'S REAL DUMB.
DUMBER THAN YOUR PUZZLE LICKING?
WAAY DUMBER!
JUST A SECOND, LEMME FIND HER!
HER?
AH!

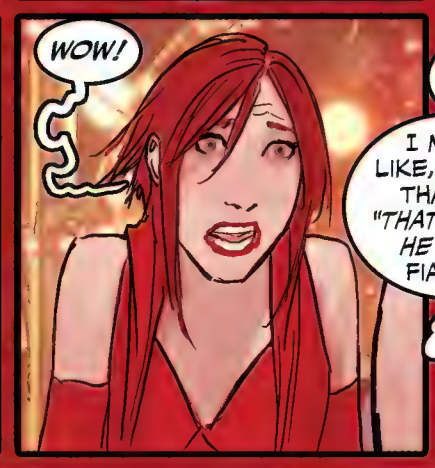

MAY I DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE...ENDOWED LADY OVER THERE?

O-O-KAY?
HERE GOES! HEY, LISA... WHAT'S THE *ELVISH* WORD FOR FRIEND?

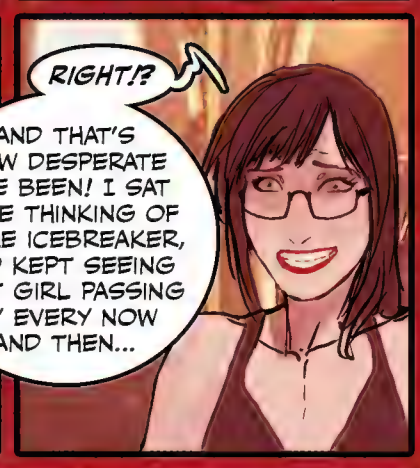
WH...UH?

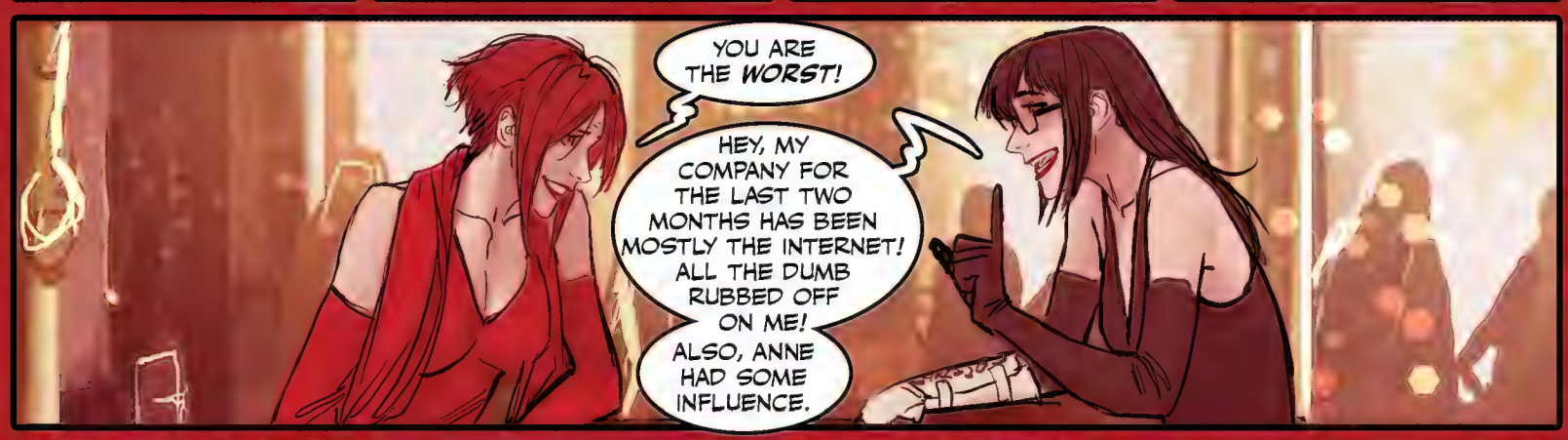
MELLON!

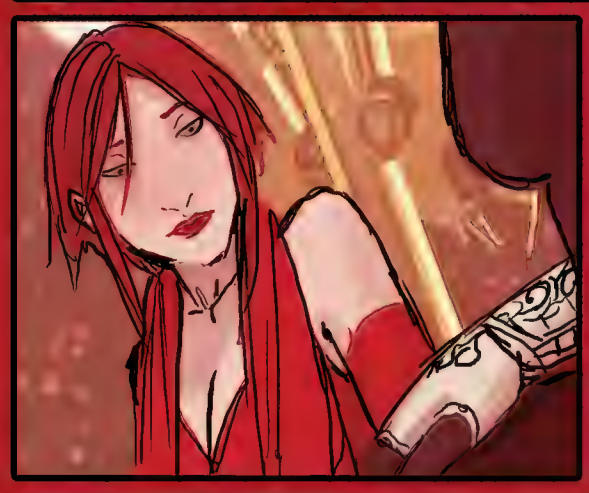


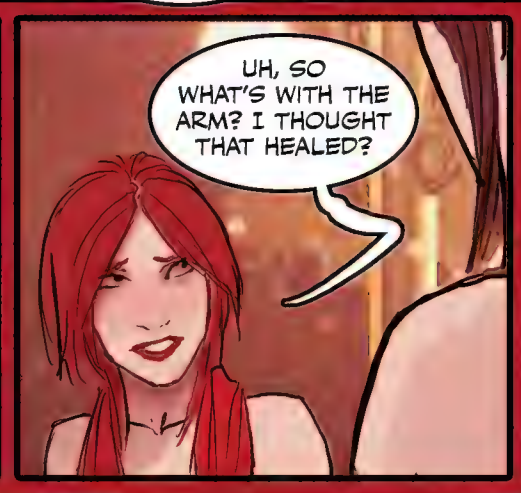

WOW!

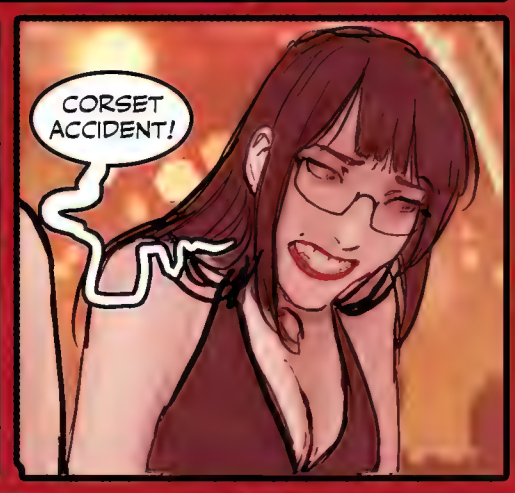
FUCK ME, THAT WAS *TERRIBLE!*
I MEAN, LIKE, WORSE THAN MY *"THAT'S WHAT HE SAID"* FIASCO!


RIGHT!?
AND THAT'S HOW DESPERATE I'VE BEEN! I SAT HERE THINKING OF SOME ICEBREAKER, AND KEPT SEEING THAT GIRL PASSING BY EVERY NOW AND THEN...

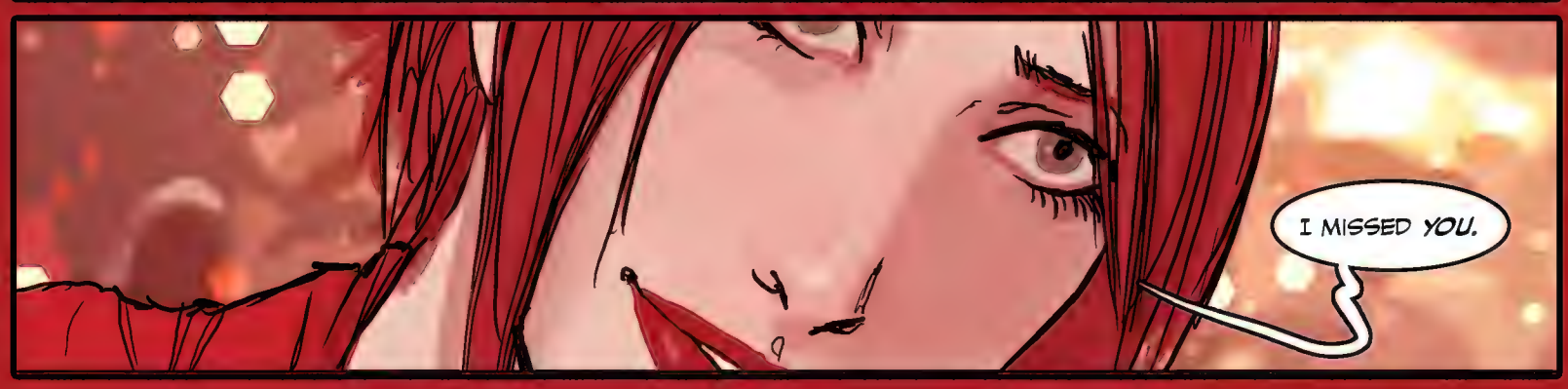

YOU ARE THE *WORST!*
HEY, MY COMPANY FOR THE LAST TWO MONTHS HAS BEEN MOSTLY THE INTERNET! ALL THE DUMB RUBBED OFF ON ME!
ALSO, ANNE HAD SOME INFLUENCE.



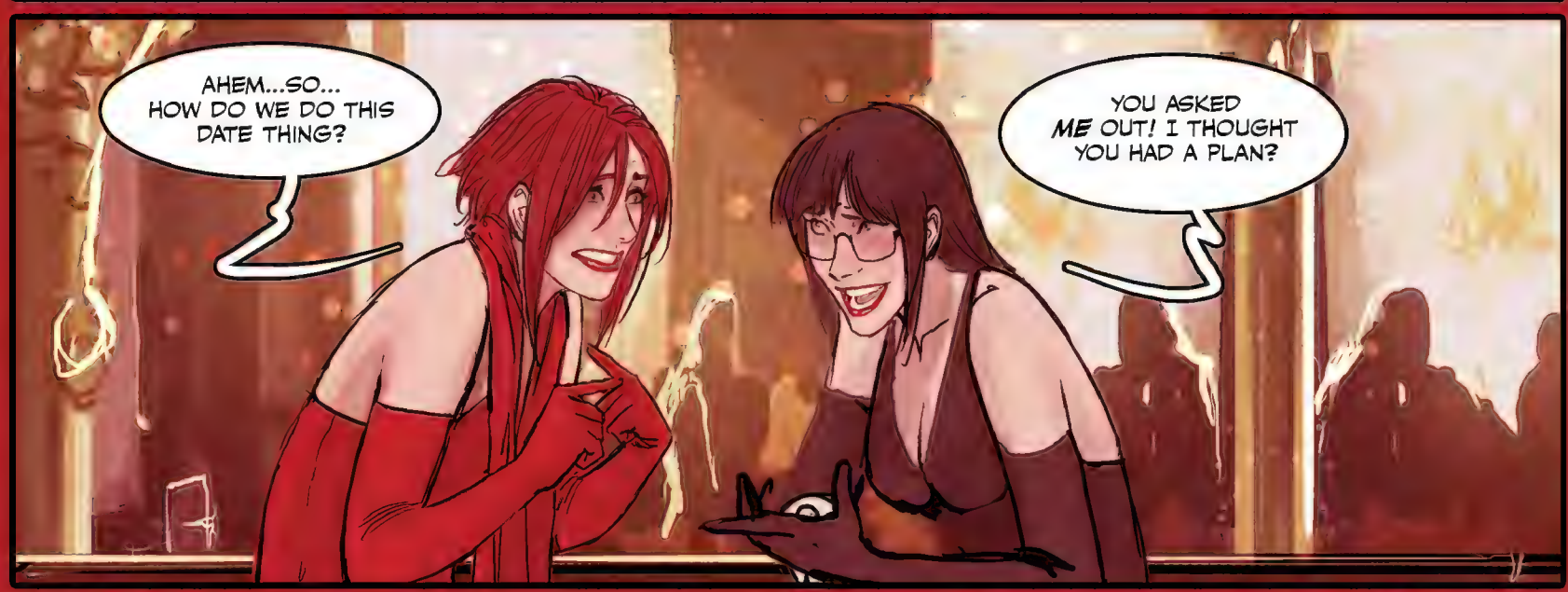

UH, SO WHAT'S WITH THE ARM? I THOUGHT THAT HEALED?


CORSET ACCIDENT!

HM...I MISSED QUITE A BIT IN THESE TWO MONTHS.


I MISSED *YOU.*

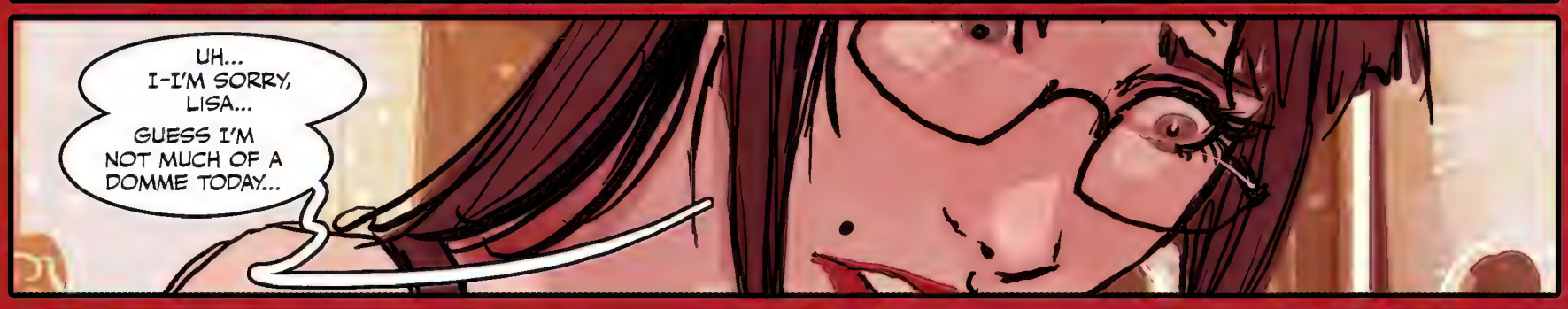
THAT... SOUNDED CHEESY...
S'OKAY.


AHEM...SO... HOW DO WE DO THIS DATE THING?
YOU ASKED *ME* OUT! I THOUGHT YOU HAD A PLAN?

HEY, IT TOOK *ALL* MY COURAGE TO ASK YOU OUT! I WASN'T THINKING MUCH BEYOND THAT!
WELL...YOU WERE CERTAINLY BRAVER THAN I...
I WOULD WUSS OUT EVERY TIME I HAD AN IDEA OF...

YOU KNOW... TAKING THE FIRST STEP.
ALL OF MY POSTURING AND WHEN IT CAME TO THIS, WHEN IT CAME TO FACING A CHANCE THAT I MIGHT WANT MORE, AND YOU DIDN'T...THE CHANCE OF THAT SCARED ME...

THOUGHT OF YOU REJECTING...
I DON'T KNOW...


UH... I-I'M SORRY, LISA...
GUESS I'M NOT MUCH OF A DOMME TODAY...

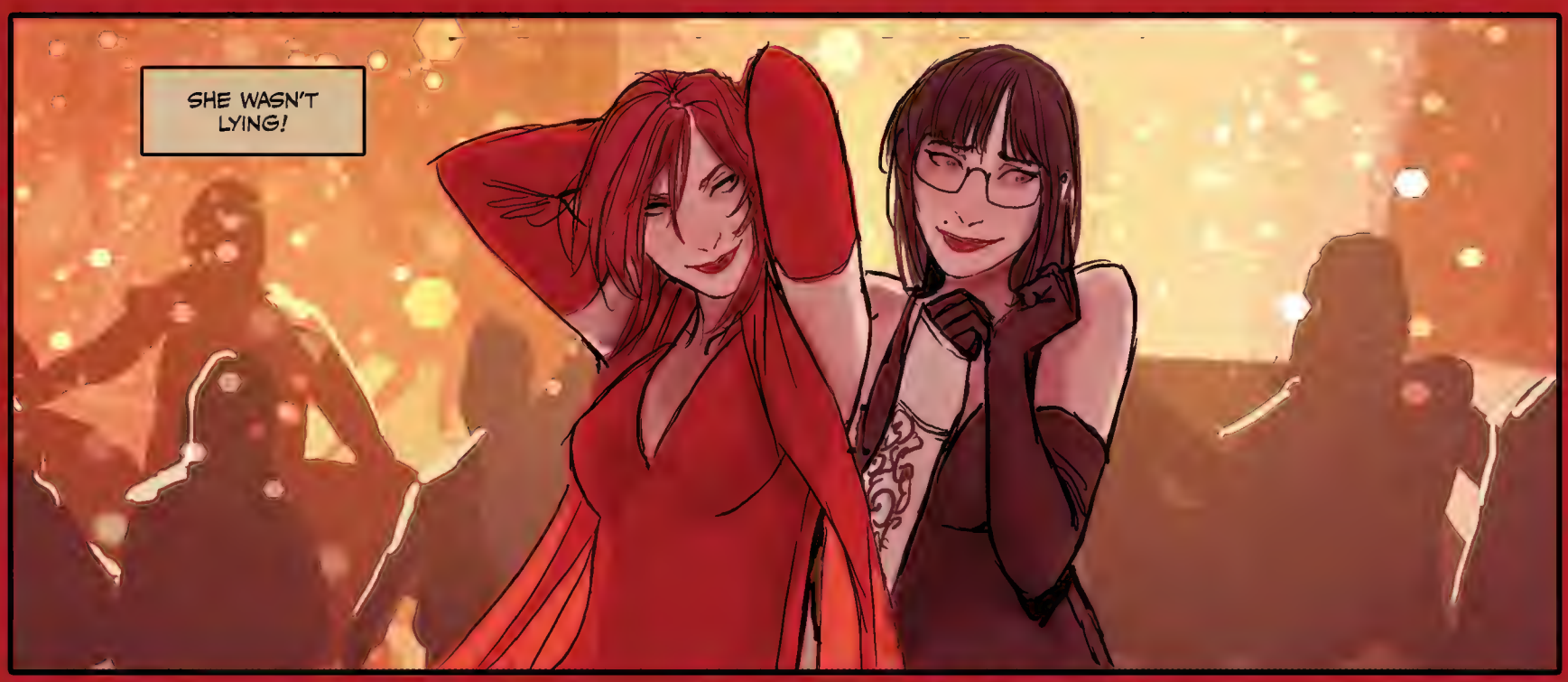
TURNS OUT, YOU'RE IN LUCK...TODAY I DON'T NEED A *DOMME.*

JUST *YOU!*

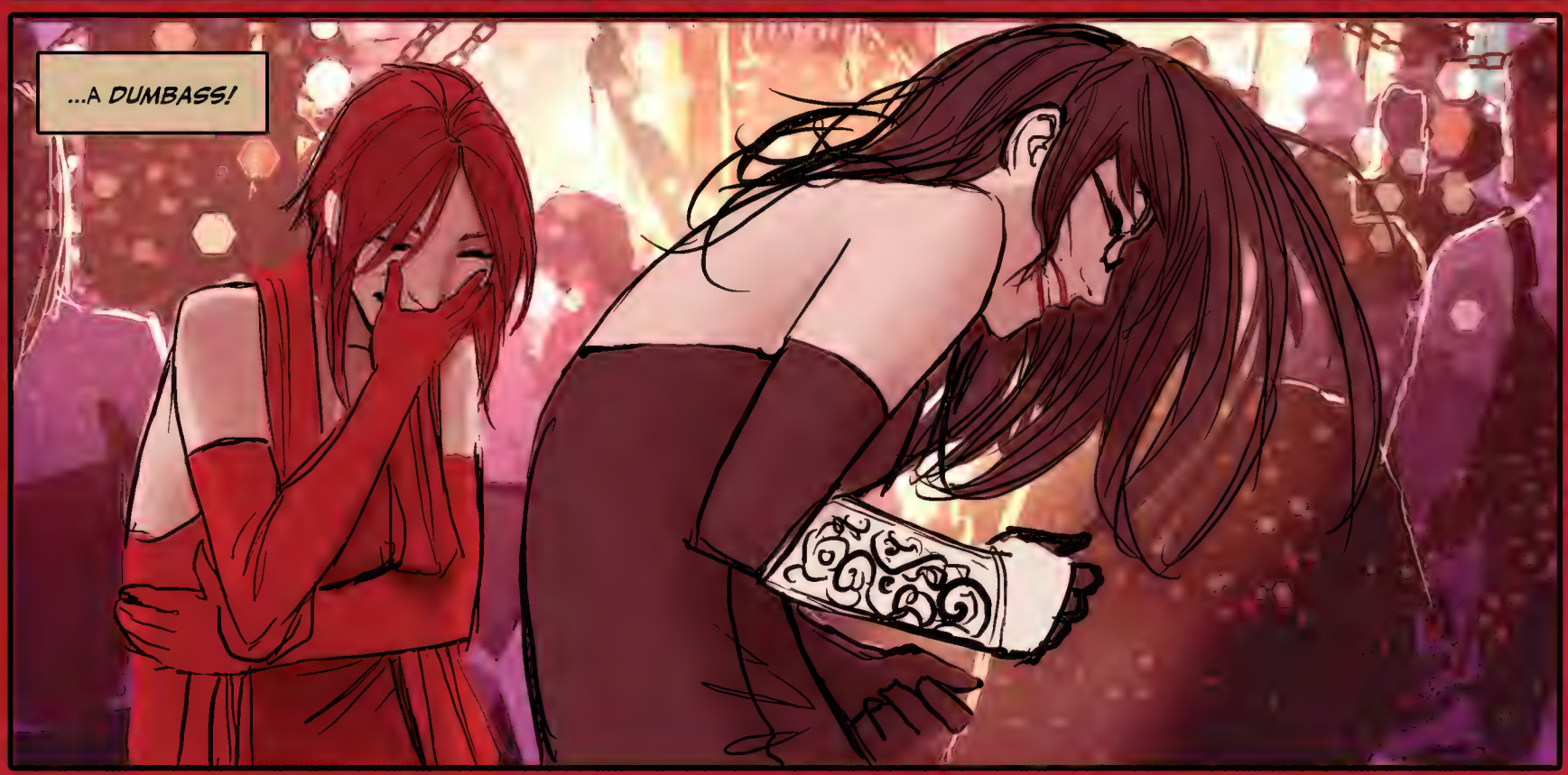
ALL RIGHT! BREAK IT UP!
?

THIS PLACE HAS BEEN QUIET FOR LONG ENOUGH! LET'S CRANK UP THE VOLUME WITH OUR LOCAL STARS RETURNING FROM THEIR SECOND TOUR!
BACK AT THE CRIMSON...
DARK BYSMUTH!
HEEEY CRIMSOOON!!!
I KNOW WHAT WE COULD DO ON A DATE.
OH NO!
COME ON! DANCE WITH ME!
NONONO! I ACTUALLY...
I'M A HORRIBLE DANCER!
IN THIS DARK HOUR, WE'RE ALONE, WE WON'T BE NEEDING ANY LIGHT...
WE CAN TEAR APART THIS CARNAL MOMENT --
BUT I WILL BREAK YOUR HEART TONIGHT!

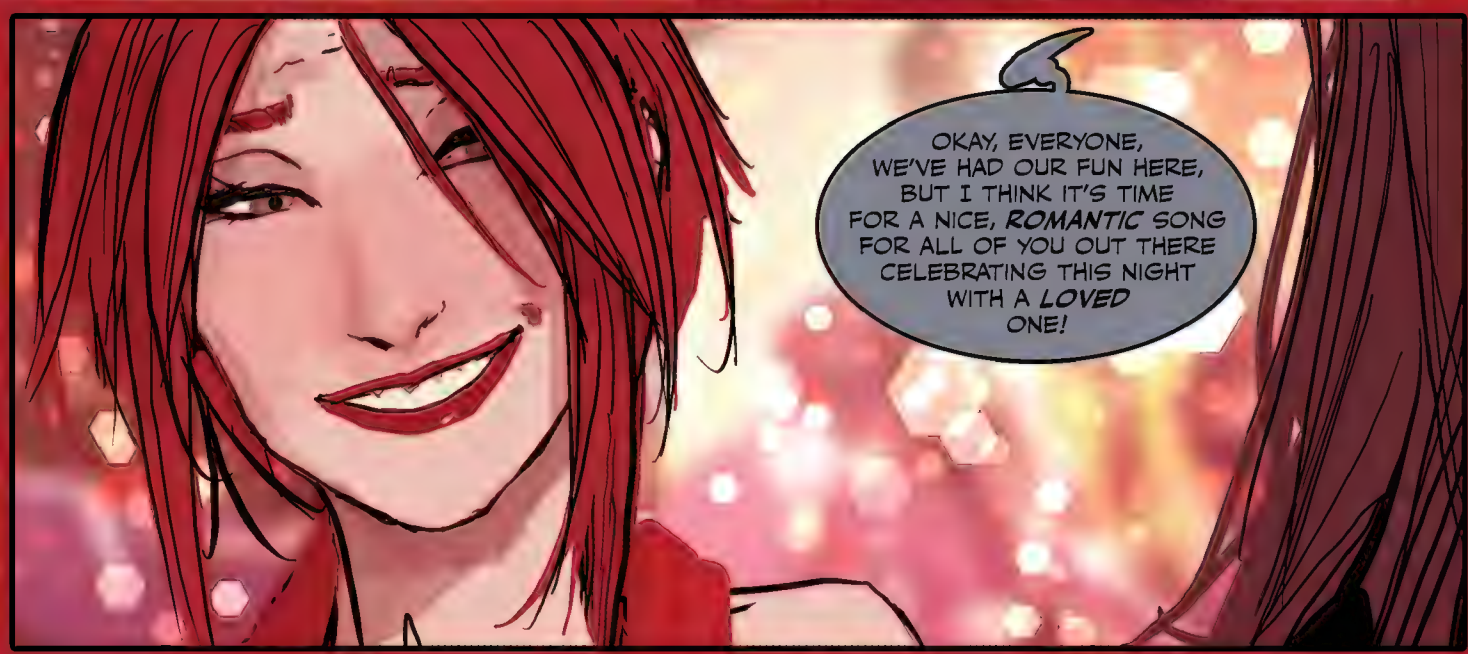
THAT'S OKAY! IT'S A HORRIBLE SONG!
LET'S GO!


SHE WASN'T LYING!

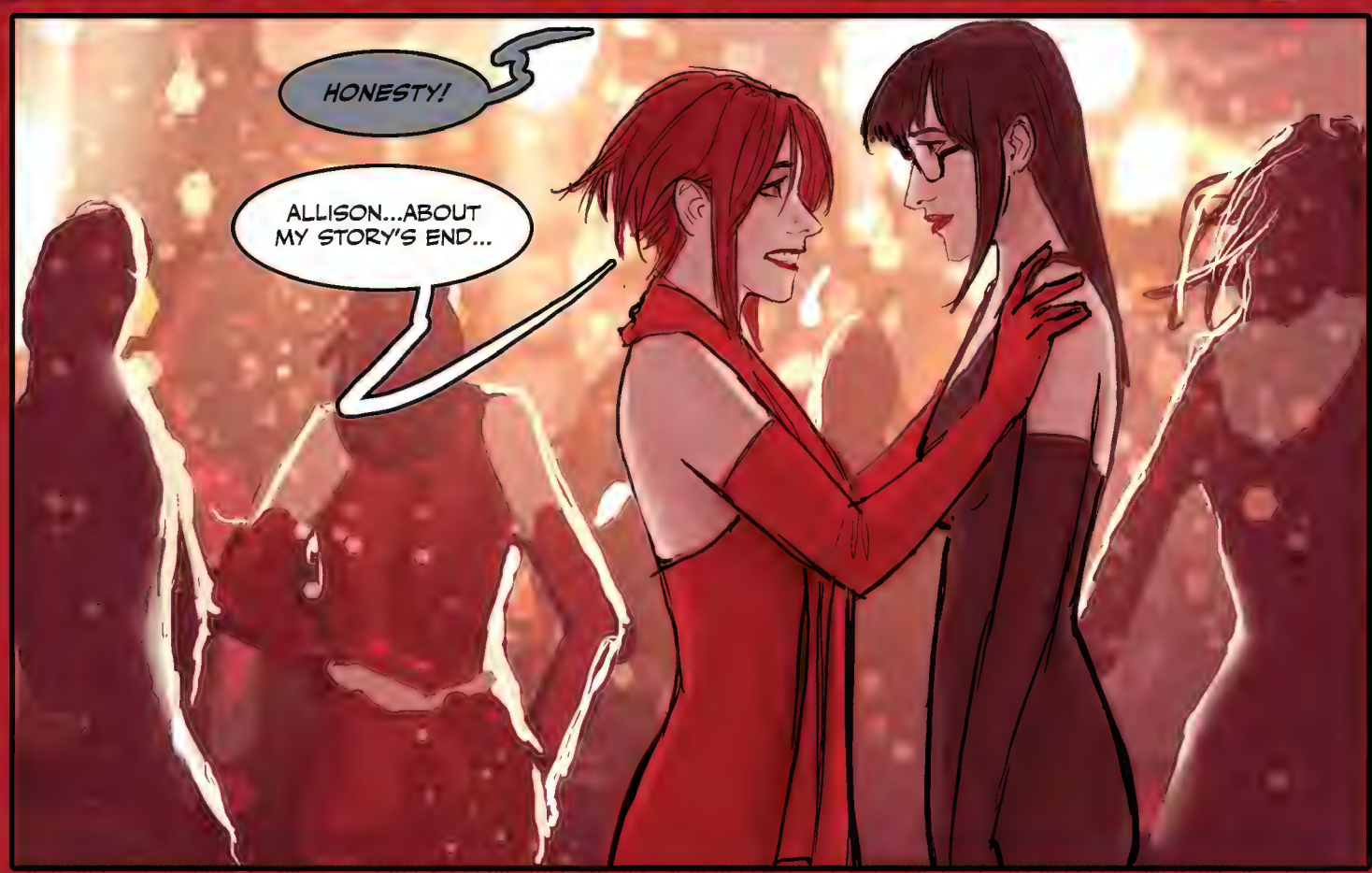
SHE COULDN'T DANCE.
SHE WAS AWKWARD...
UNCOORDINATED...

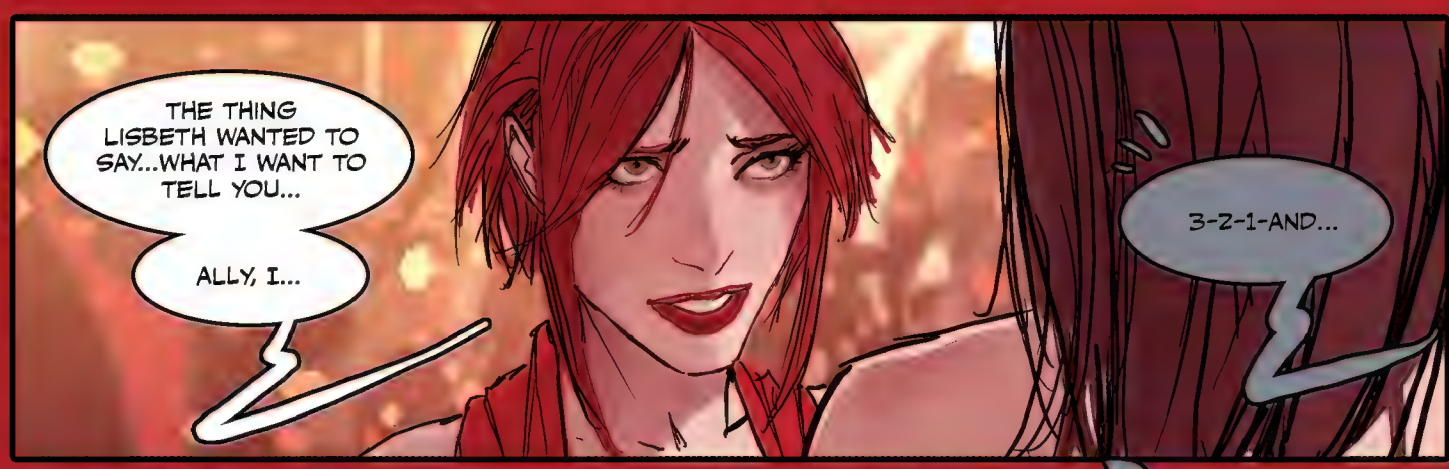

...A DUMBASS!

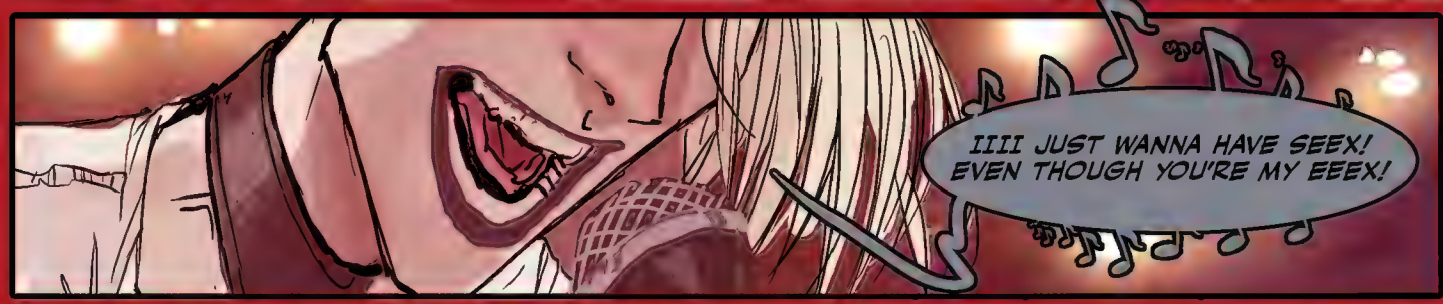
MY DUMBASS...

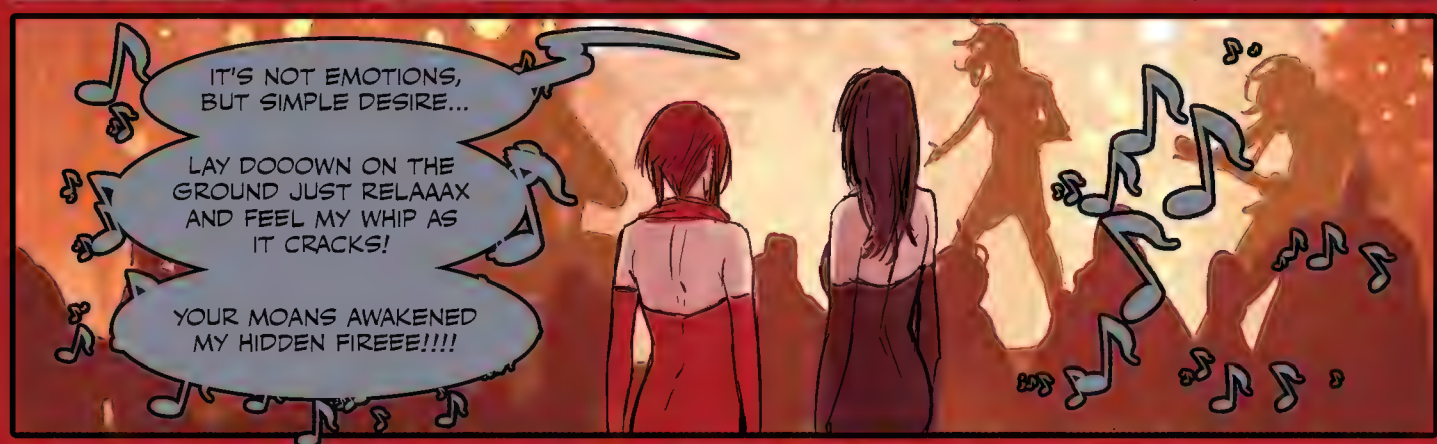

OKAY, EVERYONE, WE'VE HAD OUR FUN HERE, BUT I THINK IT'S TIME FOR A NICE, ROMANTIC SONG FOR ALL OF YOU OUT THERE CELEBRATING THIS NIGHT WITH A LOVED ONE!

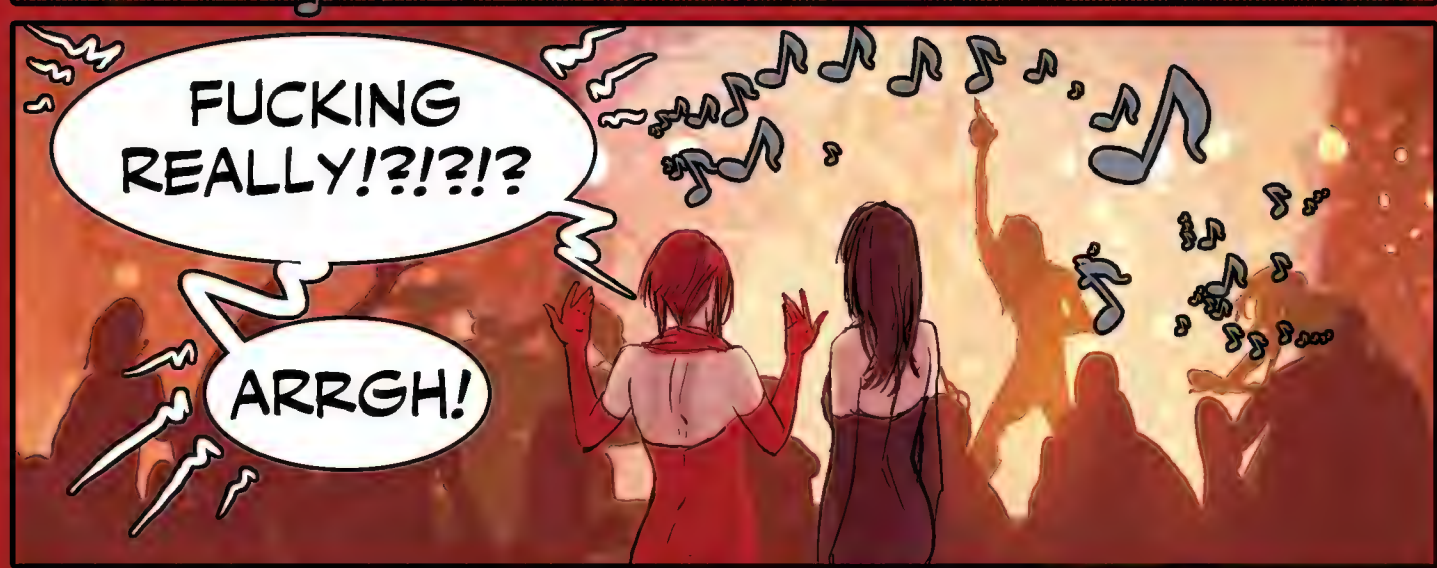
THIS IS A NEW ONE...
WE CALL IT...


HONESTY!
ALLISON...ABOUT MY STORY'S END...

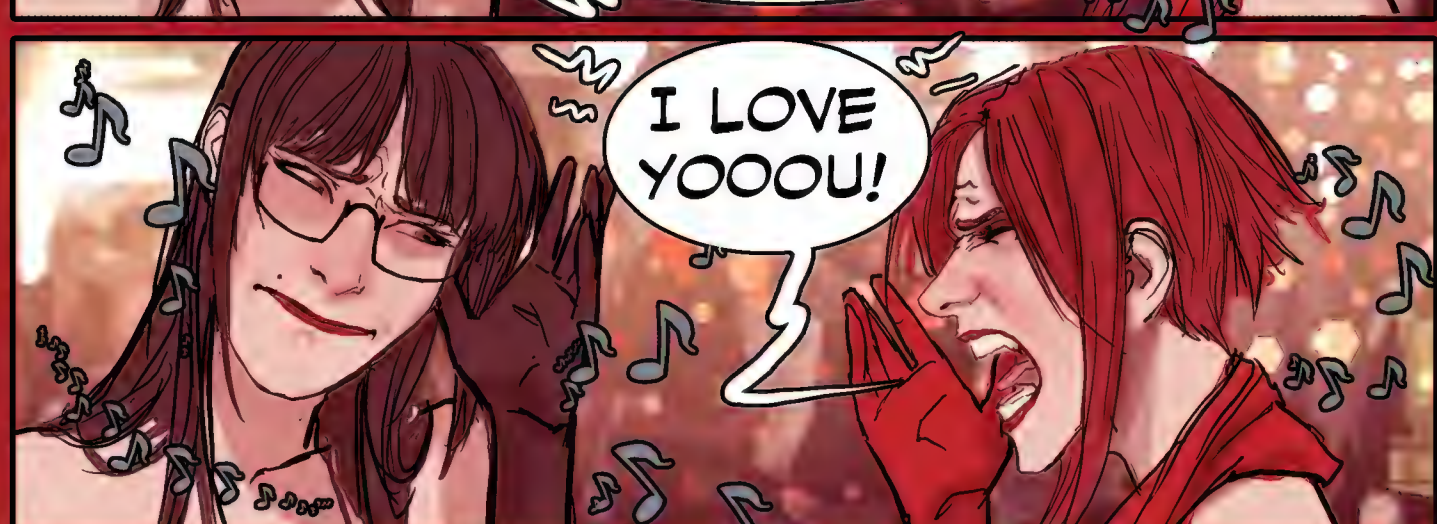

THE THING LISBETH WANTED TO SAY...WHAT I WANT TO TELL YOU...
ALLY, I...
3-2-1-AND...

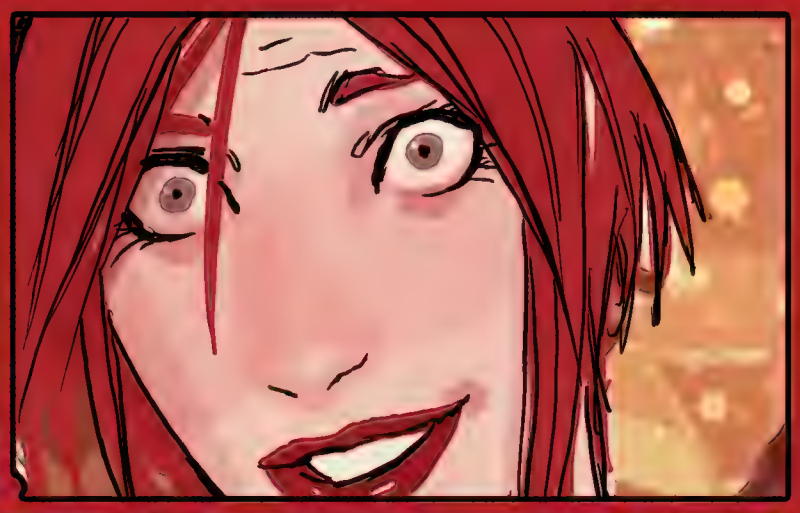

IIII JUST WANNA HAVE SEEX! EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE MY EEEX!

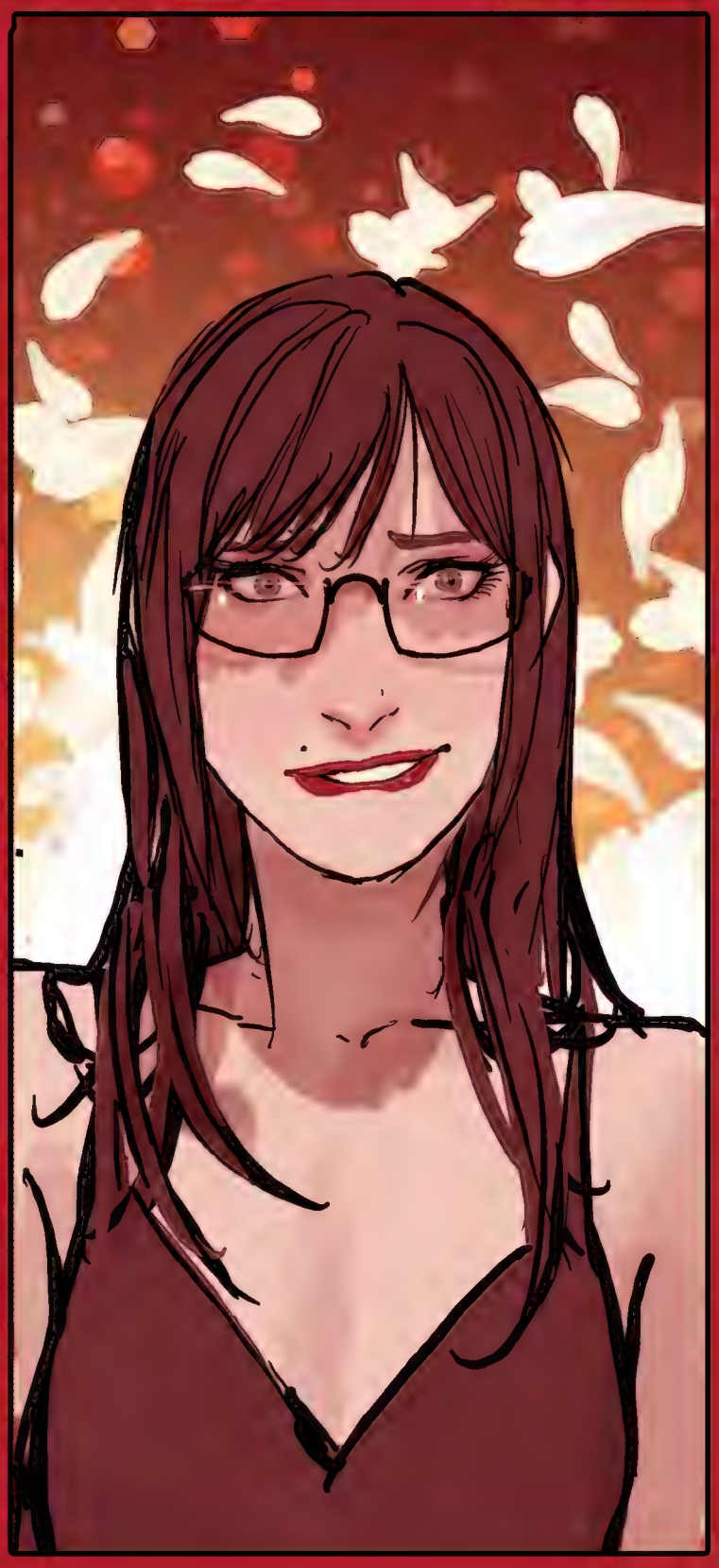

IT'S NOT EMOTIONS, BUT SIMPLE DESIRE...
LAY DOOOWN ON THE GROUND JUST RELAAAX AND FEEL MY WHIP AS IT CRACKS!
YOUR MOANS AWAKENED MY HIDDEN FIREEE!!!!


FUCKING REALLY!?!?!?
ARRGH!

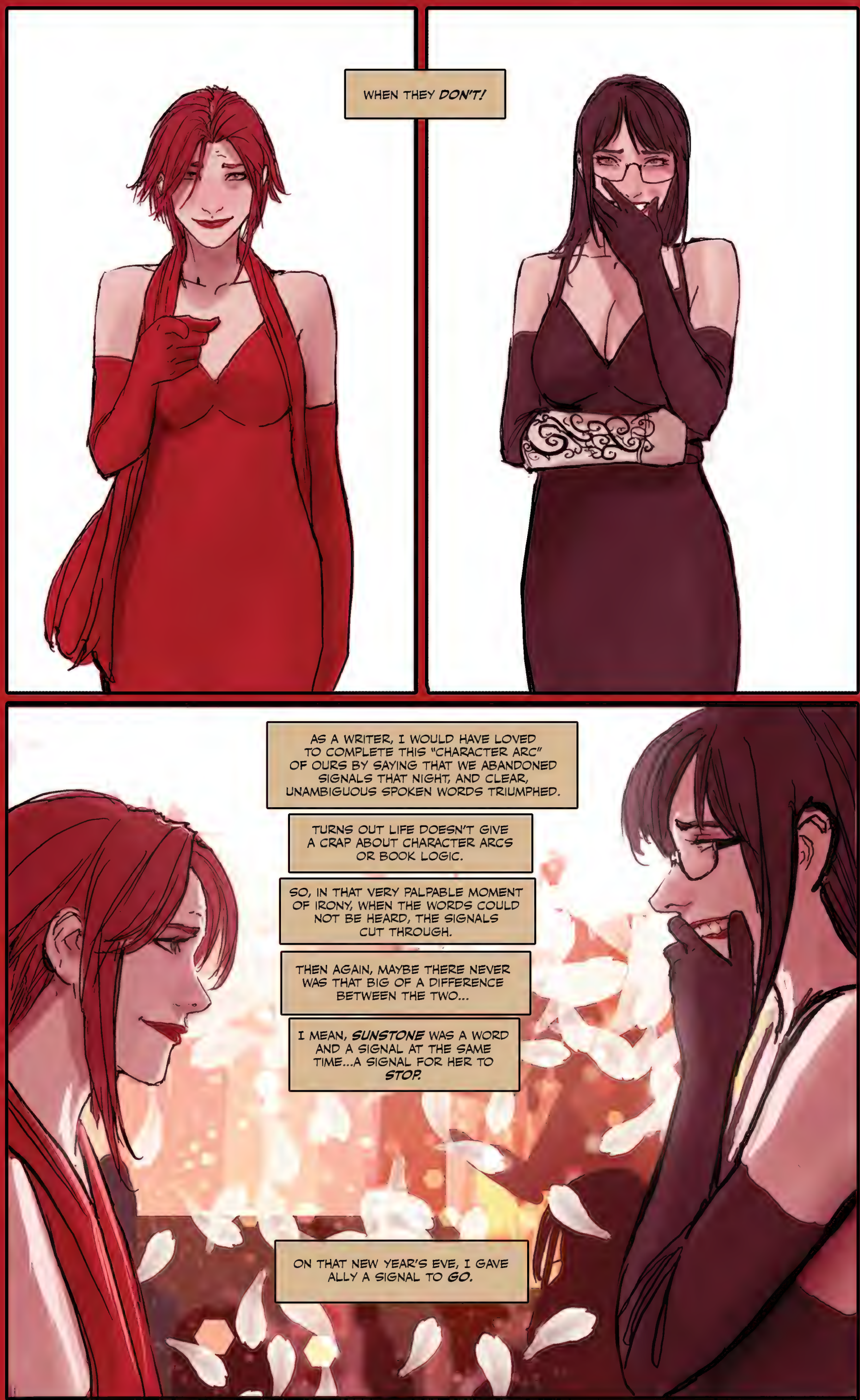
ALLY!!!
I LOVE YOU!!!
WHAAAT!?


I LOVE YOOOU!

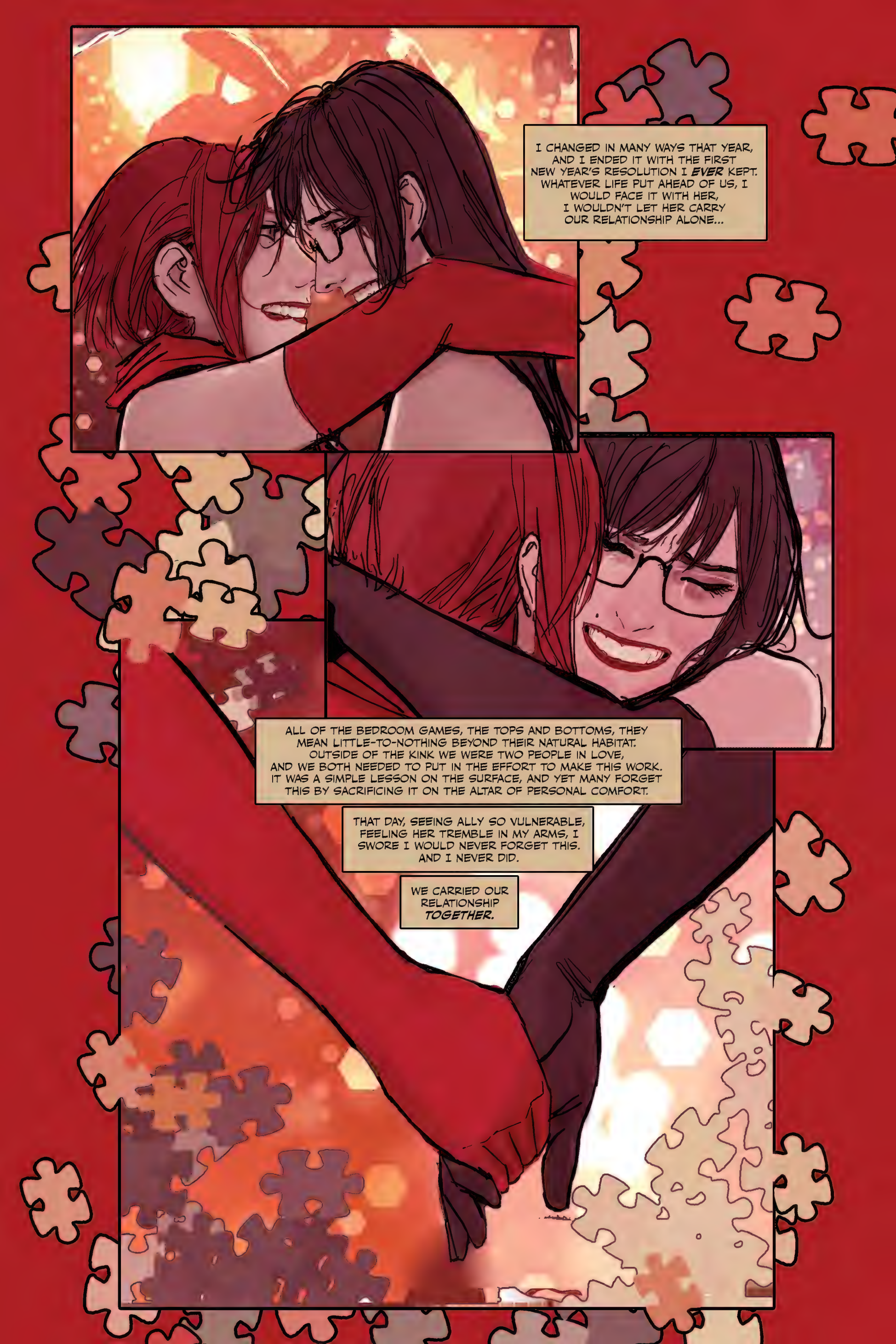


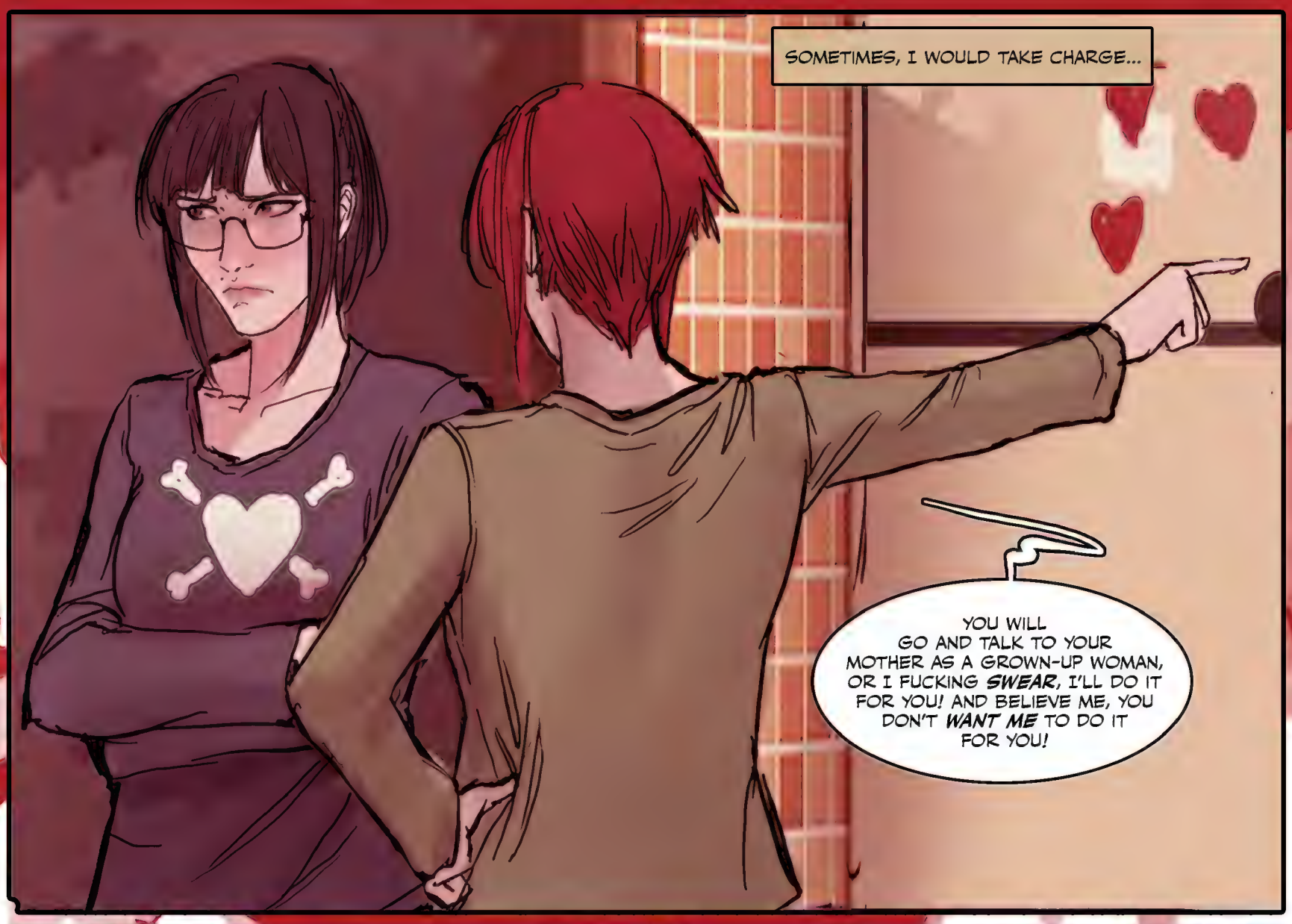


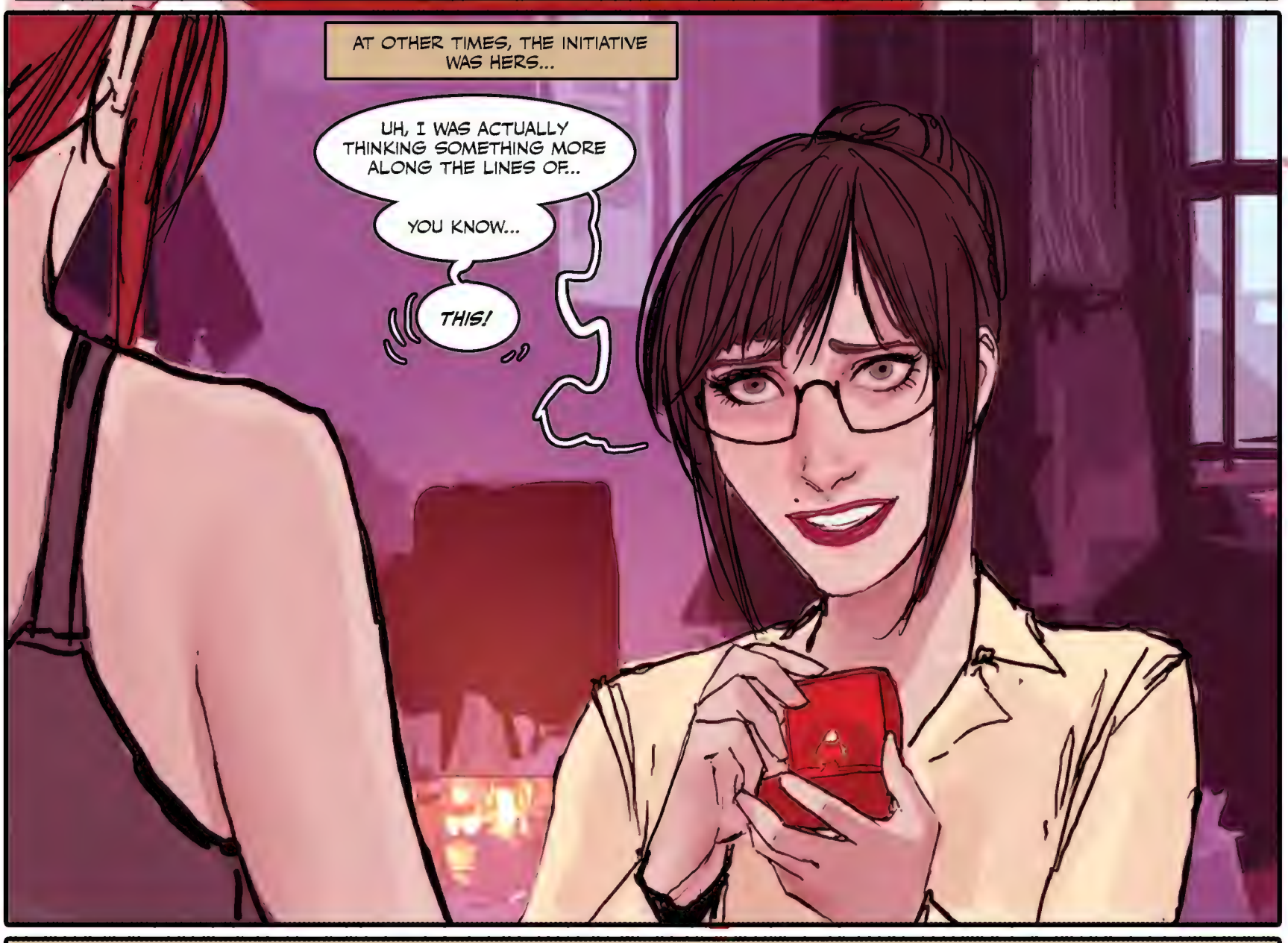
I SAID IT A FEW TIMES BEFORE...
SIGNALS SUCK...
EXCEPT...


WHEN THEY DON'T!
AS A WRITER, I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO COMPLETE THIS "CHARACTER ARC" OF OURS BY SAYING THAT WE ABANDONED SIGNALS THAT NIGHT, AND CLEAR, UNAMBIGUOUS SPOKEN WORDS TRIUMPHED.
TURNS OUT LIFE DOESN'T GIVE A CRAP ABOUT CHARACTER ARCS OR BOOK LOGIC.
SO, IN THAT VERY PALPABLE MOMENT OF IRONY, WHEN THE WORDS COULD NOT BE HEARD, THE SIGNALS CUT THROUGH.
THEN AGAIN, MAYBE THERE NEVER WAS THAT BIG OF A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO...
I MEAN, SUNSTONE WAS A WORD AND A SIGNAL AT THE SAME TIME...A SIGNAL FOR HER TO STOP.
ON THAT NEW YEAR'S EVE, I GAVE ALLY A SIGNAL TO GO.

TO GO WITH ME INTO THE UNKNOWN. INTO THE *WONDERFUL...*
MY ALLYCAT...MY *LOVE.* SHE UNDESTOOD... AND SHE RECIPROCATED.
1 MY JEALOUSY
2 MY APPRECIATION
3 MY FRIENDSHIP
5 12 DAYS OF
MY LOVE


I CHANGED IN MANY WAYS THAT YEAR, AND I ENDED IT WITH THE FIRST NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION I *EVER* KEPT. WHATEVER LIFE PUT AHEAD OF US, I WOULD FACE IT WITH HER, I WOULDN'T LET HER CARRY OUR RELATIONSHIP ALONE...
ALL OF THE BEDROOM GAMES, THE TOPS AND BOTTOMS, THEY MEAN LITTLE-TO-NOTHING BEYOND THEIR NATURAL HABITAT. OUTSIDE OF THE KINK WE WERE TWO PEOPLE IN LOVE, AND WE BOTH NEEDED TO PUT IN THE EFFORT TO MAKE THIS WORK. IT WAS A SIMPLE LESSON ON THE SURFACE, AND YET MANY FORGET THIS BY SACRIFICING IT ON THE ALTAR OF PERSONAL COMFORT.
THAT DAY, SEEING ALLY SO VULNERABLE, FEELING HER TREMBLE IN MY ARMS, I SWORE I WOULD NEVER FORGET THIS. AND I NEVER DID.
WE CARRIED OUR RELATIONSHIP *TOGETHER.*





AND IT ALL TRULY BEGAN ON THAT, ONE OF THE THE MOST WONDERFUL NIGHTS OF MY LIFE. AND NOT JUST MINE. FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE IT KICKED OFF A YEAR OF NEW LOVES... STORIES OF THEIR OWN TO BE TOLD...

Oh, yes!
We'll get to all of those later...

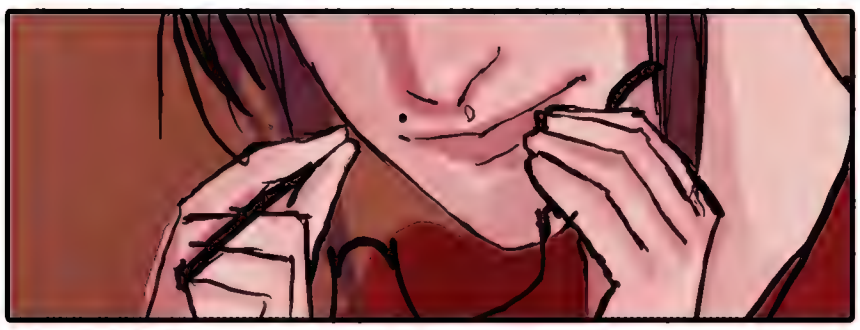
As for Ally and me, we went home.
No dommes, no subs,
not that night.

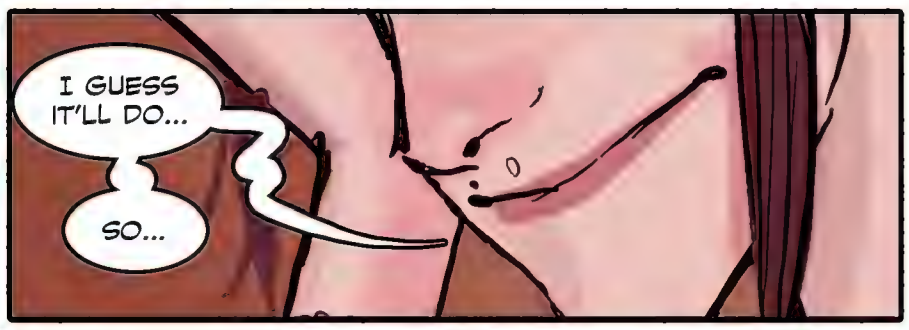
That night we made love for the first time.

And I swear, it was only
partially because Ally's arm
was too busted to tie me up.

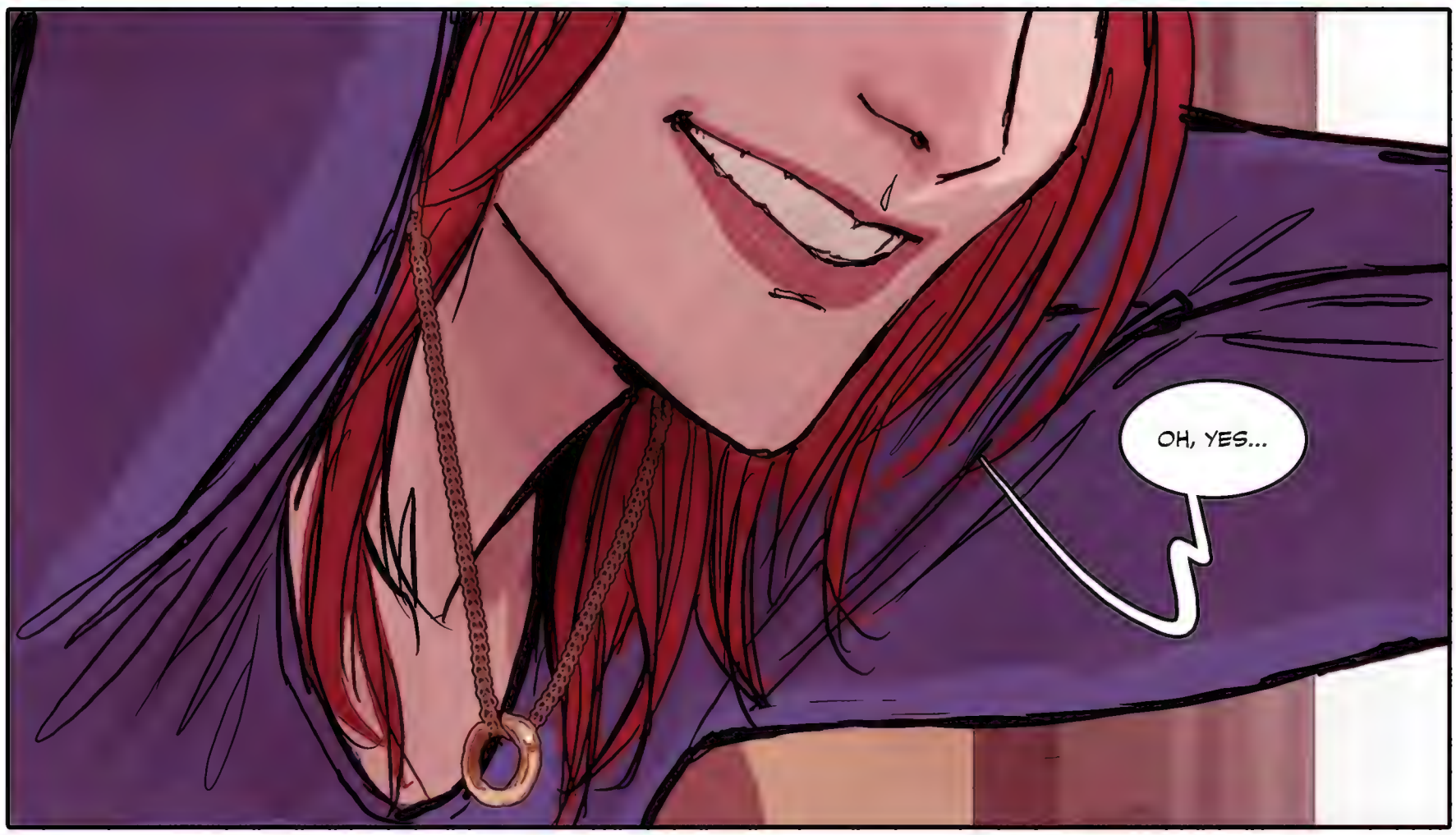
THE END

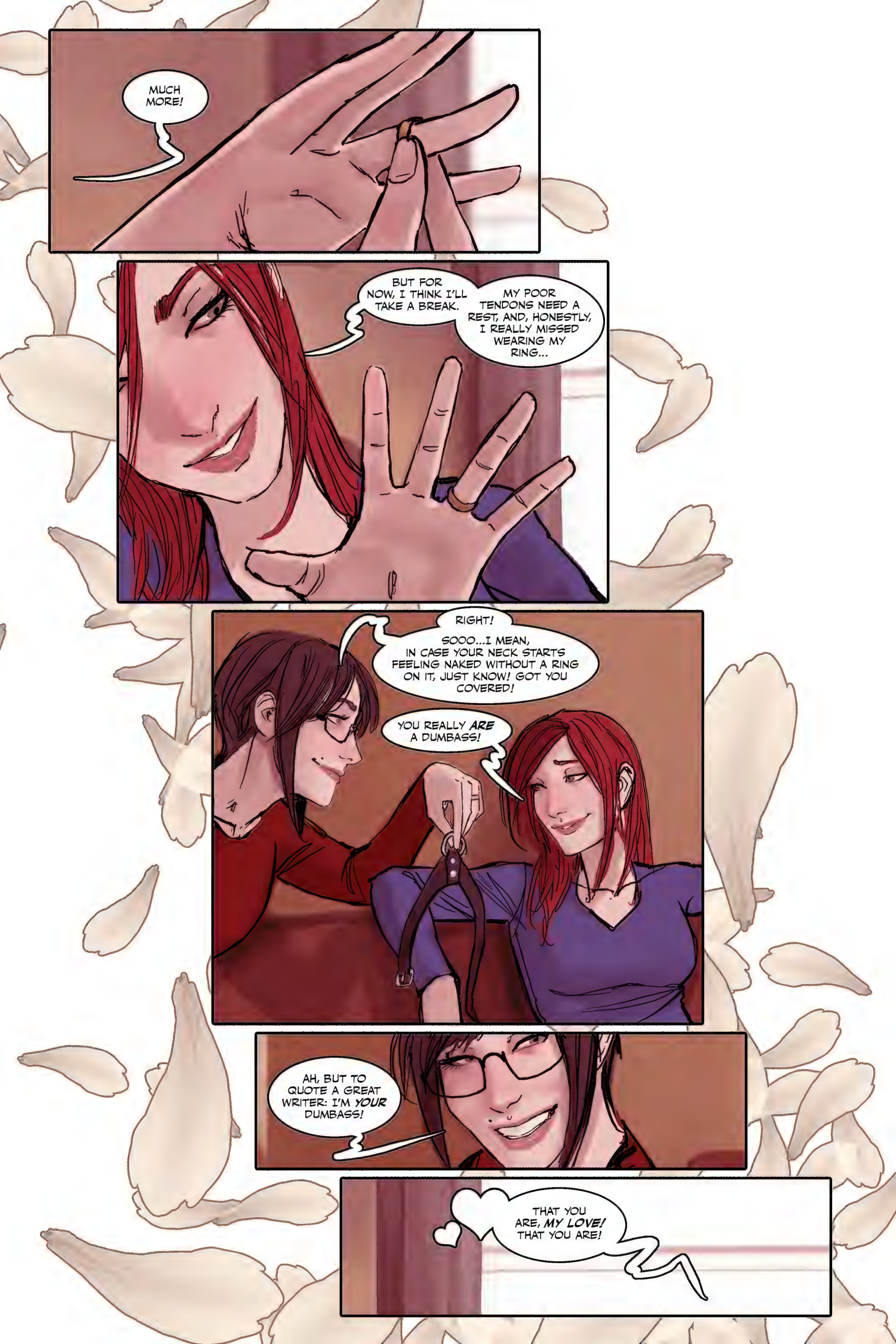
WELL?




I GUESS IT'LL DO...
SO...

GOT MORE?


OH, YES...


MUCH MORE!
BUT FOR NOW, I THINK I'LL TAKE A BREAK.
MY POOR TENDONS NEED A REST, AND, HONESTLY, I REALLY MISSED WEARING MY RING...
RIGHT!
SOOO...I MEAN, IN CASE YOUR NECK STARTS FEELING NAKED WITHOUT A RING ON IT, JUST KNOW! GOT YOU COVERED!
YOU REALLY ARE A DUMBASS!
AH, BUT TO QUOTE A GREAT WRITER: I'M YOUR DUMBASS!
THAT YOU ARE, MY LOVE! THAT YOU ARE!

5 MY MISTRESS
5 12 DAYS OF CH
MY LOVE

DONE? PUH-LEASE! WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED!

WELL, HERE WE...

OKAY, NO, HONESTLY!?!?

HOW THE FUCK ARE WE EVEN HERE???

I MEAN, WOW. I STILL REMEMBER ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN THE IDEA OF THE FINAL CLUB SCENE HIT ME. IT WAS DIFFERENT BACK THEN. BUT THE GIST OF IT WAS THERE. I STILL REMEMBER CHUCKLING THINKING, "YEAH, RIGHT...LIKE I'LL EVER TAKE THIS THAT FAR."

IT WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT TO SAY THAT I QUESTIONED MY ABILITY TO WRITE A ROMANCE. MY PREVIOUS EXPERIMENT AT WRITING BEING *RAVINE*, AN EPIC FANTASY, I HARDLY HAD ANY EXPERIENCE WITH THE GENRE.

SO THERE I WAS, SOMEWHERE AT THE END OF CHAPTER 1, THINKING..."ALIENS!"

YES, REALLY! I GENUINELY CONSIDERED AN ALIEN INVASION HAPPENING. THEY KIDNAP A BUNCH OF PEOPLE INCLUDING LISA, AND ALLY GOES ON A COSMIC ADVENTURE TO SAVE HER. SHE USES AN ALIEN DOMINANCE CROWN THAT ENABLES THE CONQUERING RACE TO CONTROL CIVILIZATIONS AND HER DOMME SPIRIT ENDS UP OVERPOWERING ALIEN CONQUERORS AND ENABLES HER TO RAISE AN ARMY...

AGAIN, ***YES! REALLY!***

IT WAS A CRAZY IDEA, BUT THE ALTERNATIVE SEEMED JUST AS CRAZY TO ME. BECAUSE THE OTHER OPTION WAS I WAS GOING TO WRITE A ROMANCE.

WRITING ABOUT BDSM WASN'T THE PROBLEM. LINDA AND I HAD OUR OWN LONG AND OFTEN HILARIOUS HISTORY WITH IT, AND WE HAD A BUNCH OF FRIENDS EAGER TO SHARE THEIR OWN DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES. NO, IT WAS THE ROMANCE PART THAT SCARED ME.

BUT...THEN I STARTED WRITING THE SECOND CHAPTER, AND CHARACTERS ONCE AGAIN DID WHAT THEY DID IN CHAPTER ONE. THEY CAME ALIVE. TURNS OUT IT WASN'T A FLUKE THE FIRST TIME.

ROMANCE AND SLICE-OF-LIFE GENRES ARE CHARACTER-POWERED STORIES. PLOT IS OFTEN SECONDARY. OVER TIME, I ADOPTED THE WRITING METHOD OF GETTING OUT OF MY CHARACTERS' WAYS. IF THEY OUTGREW MY PLANNED PLOT, I CHANGED THE PLOT, NOT THEM.

TRUST ME, EVEN PAST THE IDIOTIC ALIENS IDEA, THERE WERE MANY DISCARDED PLOTLINES THAT I PERSONALLY ***LOVED***. THEY PROVIDED ME WITH POWERFUL, EMOTIONAL, AND PLOT-DRIVING MOMENTS, BUT I HAD TO LISTEN TO MY CHARACTERS. IT WAS THEIR STORY TO TELL. THEIR REASONING, MOTIVATIONS AND EMOTIONAL STATES DICTATED THE PROGRESS. AND THEY TOOK US ALL DOWN SOME STRANGE PATHS.

AND HERE WE ARE NOW. FIRST STORY ARC COMPLETE. I SAY THE ***FIRST STORY ARC***, BECAUSE, AS IT TURNS OUT, WE'RE FAR FROM DONE.

DURING CHAPTER TWO, ANOTHER THING BECAME APPARENT. THIS WAS GOING TO GO FAR BEYOND JUST ***SUNSTONE***. THERE WERE RELEVANT THINGS TO BE SAID THROUGH SEVERAL STORIES. SEVERAL INTERTWINED RELATIONSHIPS...AND SO, I STARTED PLANTING THE SEEDS OF FUTURE ARCS.

(YOU PROBABLY PICKED UP ON AT LEAST SOME OF THEM.)

SPEAKING OF THESE FUTURE STORY ARCS...

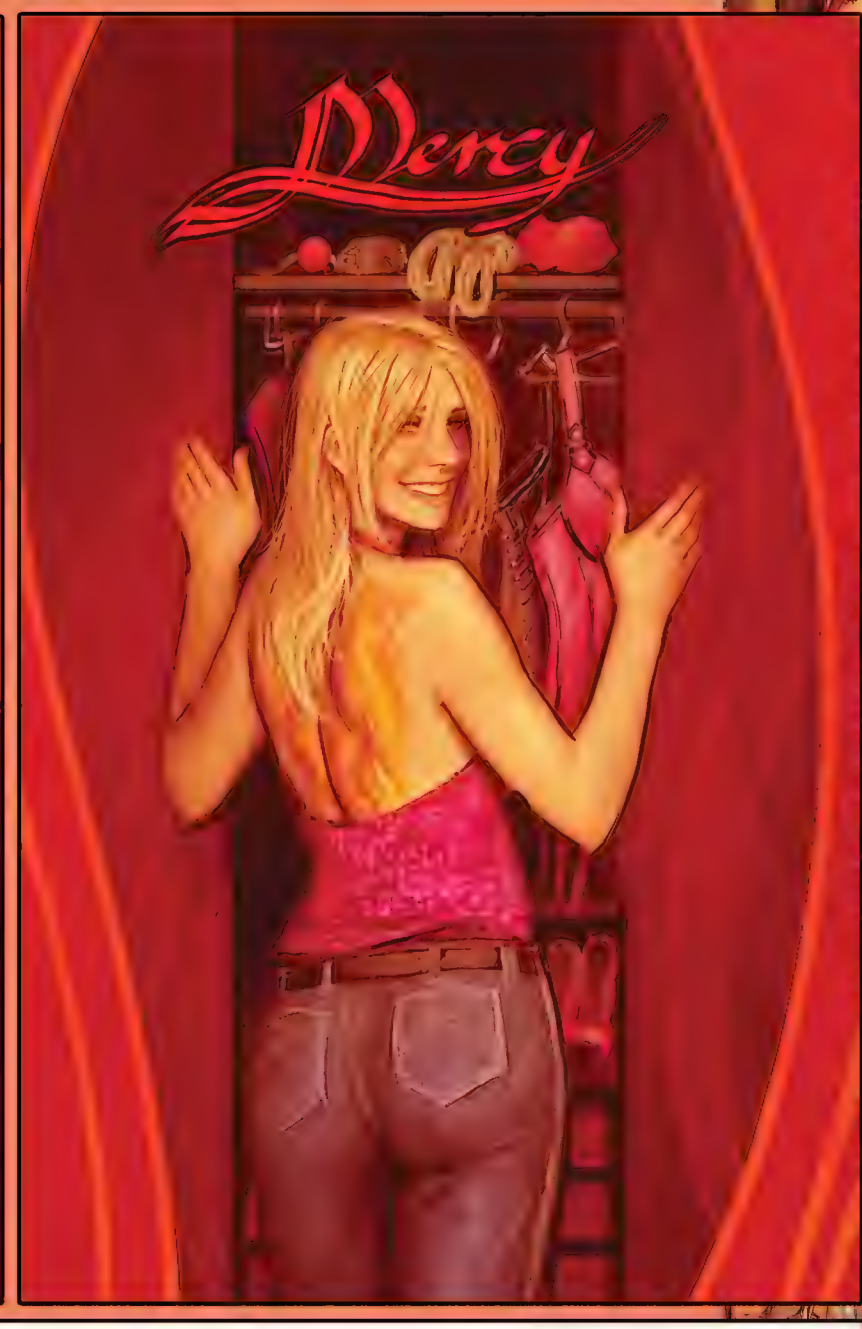
SO, WITH THAT IN MIND WE TURN TO THE FUTURE. THE NEXT STORY ARC IS CALLED...

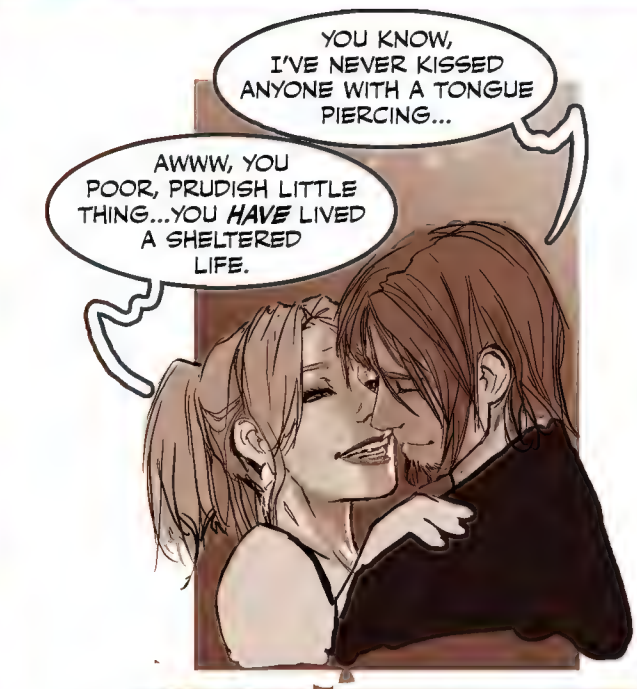
MERCY.

IT IS A STORY ABOUT ALAN AND ANNE. ABOUT THEIR STRANGE, COMPLICATED PAST AND THEIR STRANGER AND EXCITING FUTURE. WE WILL SEE ANNE'S COLLEGE DAYS, HER BECOMING AWARE AND DEALING WITH THE IDEA OF BEING BISEXUAL. HER FRIENDSHIP WITH CASSIE AND GROWING LOVE FOR THE ART OF TATTOOING. WE GET TO SEE HER MAKE MISTAKES AND LEARN FROM THEM... SOME QUITE HILARIOUS MISTAKES. (THERE IS A REASON SHE HAS A MASSIVE PHOENIX TATTOO ON HER BACK).

AT THE SAME TIME, WE WILL SEE ALAN AND ALLY'S FRIENDSHIP FORM THROUGH THEIR COLLEGE RELATIONSHIP AND ONWARDS.

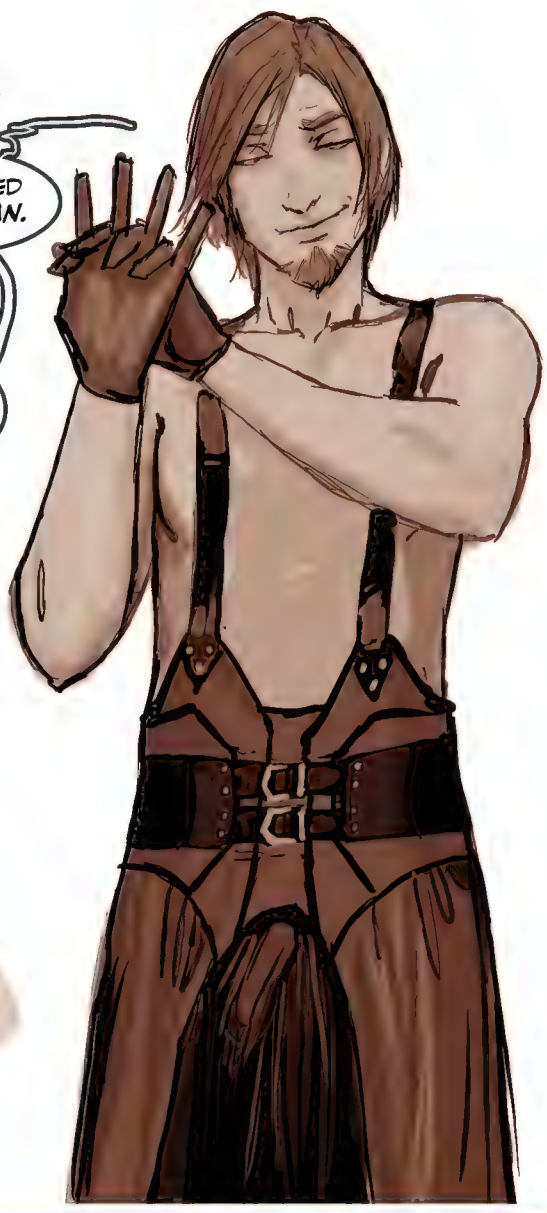
MERCY IS A STORY OF PERSONAL GROWTH, OF TWO PEOPLE WHO HAD TO GROW UP ENOUGH TO BE READY FOR EACH OTHER.




YOU KNOW, I'VE NEVER KISSED ANYONE WITH A TONGUE PIERCING...
AWWW, YOU POOR, PRUDISH LITTLE THING...YOU *HAVE* LIVED A SHELTERED LIFE.

WHAT IS IT?
IIIIIII... GOTTA PEE!
SIGH...

MNNNNNHHH!
IT'S CALLED THE *SYBIAN.*
MMMMM...
I KNOW, RIGHT?
RRRRRRRRR



AFTER THAT, WE BEGIN THE THIRD STORY ARC...

JASPER.

THE STORY OF MARION AND JAMES. IN IT, WE WILL SEE IN DETAIL THE RISE AND FALL OF MARION AND ALAN FROM HER SIDE OF THINGS. FOLLOWING THAT, WE LEARN ABOUT THE AFTERMATH OF MARION DEALING WITH THE ADDICTIVE NATURE OF BDSM AS SHE SEEKS HELP FROM SEVERAL PSYCHIATRISTS. IN THE END, SHE FINDS THE RIGHT ONE, AND THIS PSYCHIATRIST ADVISES MARION THAT SHE CAN'T REALLY GO COLD TURKEY. IT WILL ONLY MAKE HER OBSESS ABOUT BDSM MORE. INSTEAD, SHE NEEDS TO REGAIN CONTROL AND BALANCE OVER HER SEX LIFE. EFFECTIVELY, SHE URGES MARION TO FIND HER ***DOMSPACE.***

MARION FINDS IT WITH JAMES, A CROSSDRESSER SHE KNEW FROM HER CRIMSON-FREQUENTING DAYS. COINCIDENTALLY, BACK THEN SHE WORKED HARD ON HOOKING UP JAMES AND ALLY.

(OH YES, IT'S THERE, MENTIONED AND EVEN SHOWN IN *SUNSTONE* CHAPTERS!)

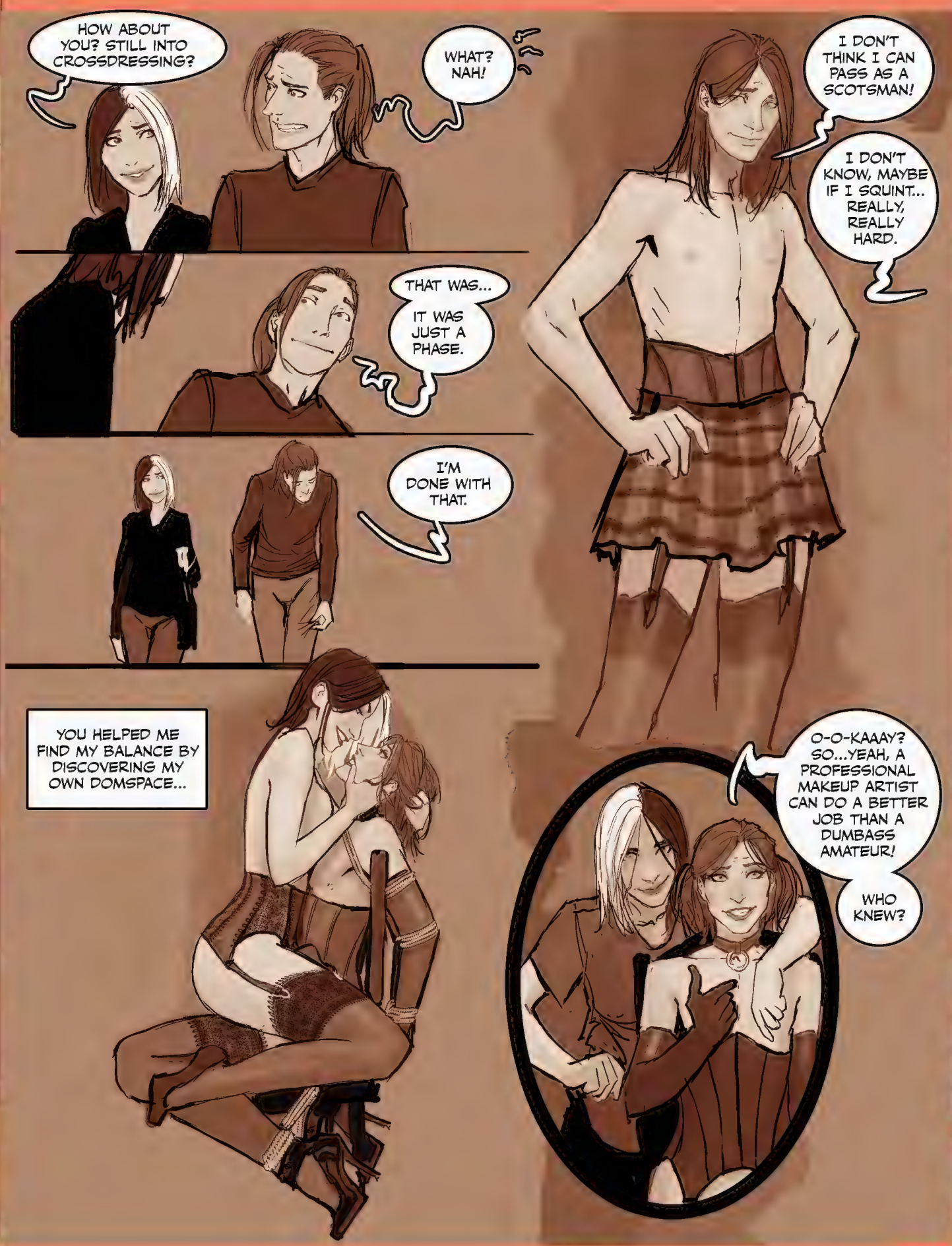
THIS COUPLE HAS A STORY OF THEIR OWN AND ISSUES UNIQUE TO THEM.

AND THEN ...WELL...THERE IS MORE TO BE TOLD.

I WON'T SHARE TOO MUCH. BUT I GUESS THERE IS THE OBVIOUS THING COMING UP.

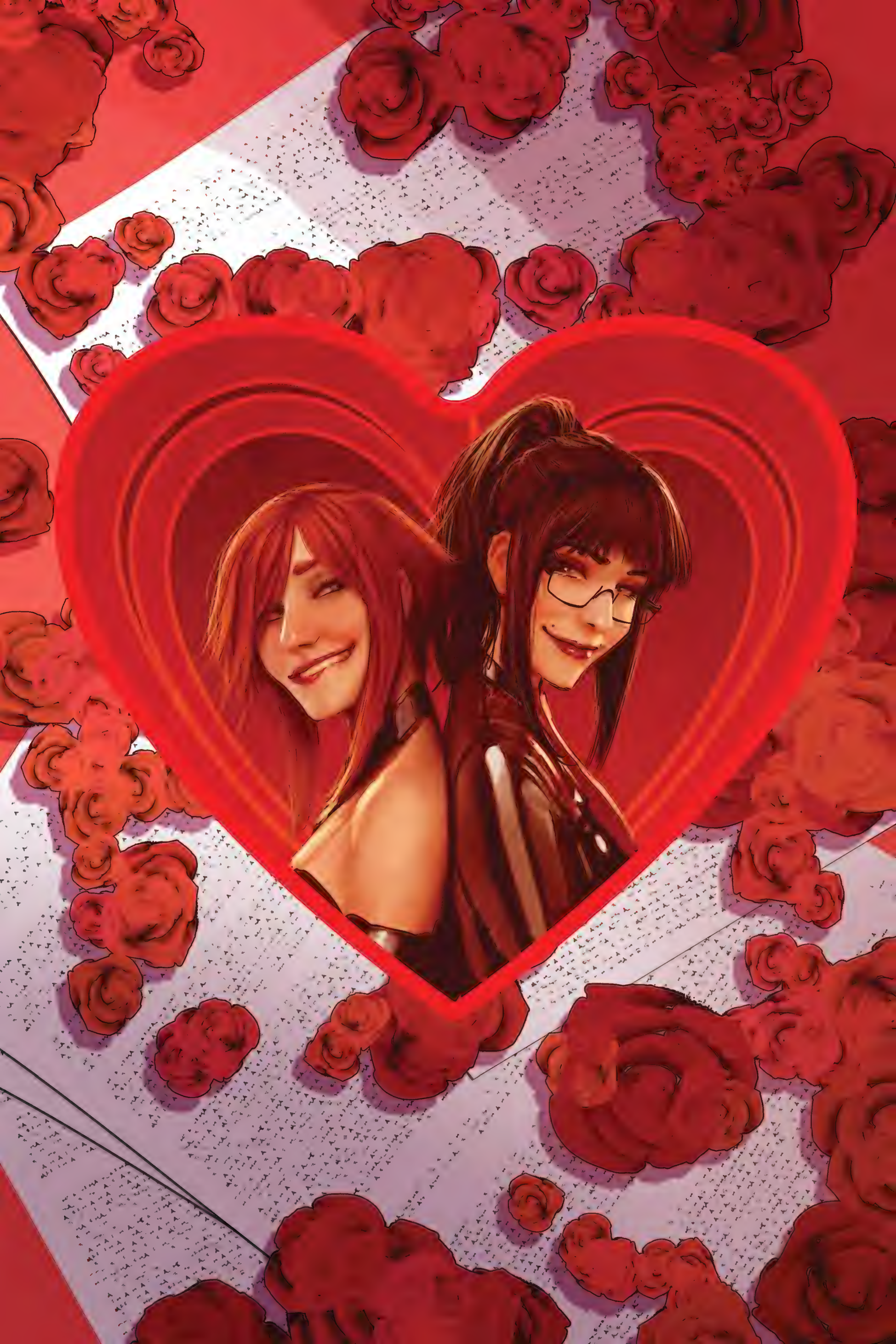
WE'VE GOT A LONG, FUN ROAD AHEAD OF US. THOSE OF YOU WHO ONLY READ IT IN PRINT ALSO HAVE A BIT OF A WAIT AHEAD OF YOU. HOPEFULLY IT WILL BE WORTH IT TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW THESE STORIES AS THEY APPEAR ONLINE. SEE YOU SOON.

-STJEPAN



MARION, WAIT!!!
WHAT!?!?
I...UM...I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE COMING OVER...
SO?
WELL...EHM... I WAS KIND OF IN THE MIDDLE OF...
JAMES, WHAT IS IT?
UM...
WELL... I'M...I'M WEARING...
STOCKINGS...
HUH?
DUDE!
DUDEDUDE DUDE!!!
WHAT!?
VACUUM BED
THIS IS WHY YOU FUCKING PAY JABBA THE MONEY!
STOCKINGS...
YEAH?
SO AM I!
WE DOING THIS OR WHAT?
WHOOPS!
BECAUSE, SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA START THE GAME YOURSELF! #JUSTSUBTHINGS

THE DOCTOR IS...IN!
OH, SHUT UP AND FUCK ME!
SHUT UP AND FUCK ME, WHAAAT??
SIR!
SAY CHEESE!
FEEFE!



SO, BALL-AND-CHAINED... IS IT ALL YOU EXPECTED IT TO BE?
HEY, I'M A SUB! THAT'S KINDA MY THING!

Sunstone

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and that was enough."

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